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A

TREATISE ON THE NATURE, POWERS, ORDINANCES, DISCIPLINE, AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

BY THE LATE

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EDITED BY HIS SON.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THIS treatise is made up of the Lectures delivered by Dr. Bannerman during each Winter Session of the New College to the students of the fourth year. The MS. was left by him in a very perfect state, the course having been fully written out from the first, and the changes and additions made of late years being, so far as the Editor is aware, confined to matters of detail. The completeness and symmetry of the plan on which the Lectures were arranged, and the intimate relation of the several parts to the whole which they make up, left room for little modification in preparing the work for the press, save in the way of omitting recapitulations and a few purely academic allusions. In no case has any freedom been used with the Author's language which could in the slightest degree alter or obscure his meaning. Notes and references added by the Editor are marked with brackets.

The following analysis of the work may be here inserted, for which the Editor is indebted to Professor Rainy:—

"In this treatise the principles and leading applications of the doctrine of the Church are discussed; the Church being here considered chiefly as it becomes visible, and exercises definite appointed functions; and the fundamental principles laid down being those commonly received among Scottish Presbyterians. The importance of the topic, and its eminently practical character, will not be disputed. Questions such as those regarding the sense in which the Church is a Divine institution,—regarding the powers entrusted to her, the principles on which they are to be exercised, and the virtue to be ascribed to her action in the use of them,—the various controversies regarding offices, discipline, sacraments, schisms, and the like,—these are not only important at all times,

but at the present time they become continually more urgent. It will perhaps also be admitted, that those who have to handle them do not always give evidence of mature thought and of a consistent scheme of principles. Hence, the difficulties necessarily arising from conflicts of opinion are aggravated by those which result merely from perplexity and confusion. The eminently clear and connected treatment which the subject here receives, will therefore, it is believed, reward the attention of careful readers. Even those who belong to other schools, and do not concur with the Author in his conclusions, may benefit by the specimen here given of a coherent scheme of doctrine, and by the obligations which it may be felt to impose on any one who sets forth a counter scheme.

"The arrangement of the course is simple; and a very brief explanation with respect to it will suffice. In contemplating the Church, it is natural to ask, first, under what authority this Society has been constituted, what is its essential nature, what its peculiar characteristics. These topics accordingly are first taken up; and they naturally lead to the inquiry, how this Society stands related to the other great and permanent forms of human fellowship, and, in particular, to the State. Next, the functions of the Church come into view. But before entering upon these in detail, a preliminary set of questions present themselves as necessary to be determined. In discharging her functions, the Church professes to exercise some kind of power and authority. But much depends on the view that may be taken of the nature of this power, and of the efficacy to be ascribed to it. The second general head, therefore, is occupied with the subject of Church power,—its source, nature, limits, and ends. Nor is this all; for it is an old, and not in all respects an easy question, in whom, *i.e.* in what members of the Church, this power has its primary residence and seat. The discussion, therefore, of the question touching the primary subject of Church power follows, and closes the second head. The principles so far established have next to be applied in detail to the various kinds of matter in and about which the Church exercises her powers, and her specific rights and

duties with respect to each have to be considered. These matters may be reduced to three heads: Doctrine, Ordinances or Worship, and Discipline. Each of these heads involves a variety of subordinate points. The second of them, Worship, is especially comprehensive. The Church discharges important functions with respect to the various parts of worship, the seasons for it, and the agents who ought to conduct it; and, in particular, the peculiar institutions called Sacraments give rise to a large class of questions which require separate and detailed consideration,—so various have been the apprehensions of men concerning their nature, and the office of the Church in connection with them. These topics, then, constitute the material of the third general head. Finally, the question regarding the persons to whom the exercise of Church power ought to be committed, leads into the discussion of the Scriptural form of Church government. This constitutes the fourth general head, and completes the scheme.

"It would not be easy, it is believed, to point to any one work in which this class of subjects is treated so comprehensively, and with the unity and thoroughness which characterize these Lectures. In the older systems, the head *De Ecclesiâ* comprehended topics all of which fall within Dr. Bannerman's scheme; but only some of them received full and satisfactory treatment. Separate works of a more exhaustive kind, such as the *Politica Ecclesiastica* of Voetius, did not cover, nor profess to cover, the whole ground. In modern German writings the discussion of these matters, though often very learned and able, will not be regarded in this country as satisfactory, nor even very helpful as regards the questions which are most important for us. The condition of the German Churches is not favourable to an equal and searching survey of the whole field. Moreover, in their Theological systems, the topics, so far as discussed, are taken up partly under Systematic and partly under Practical Theology, and the treatment suffers from this dispersion. In our own country the discussion of Church questions has been extremely active, and it is likely to continue. Many able writings have appeared, bearing on larger or smaller

sections of the field. Without wishing to detract from their value and ability, it may perhaps be fairly said that the objects which the writers had in view have generally led them to spend their strength chiefly on those questions which are matters of exciting discussion, and to pass by others, more recondite perhaps, or less debated, but well entitled to a place in a full survey of this great subject. A comparison of the topics dealt with in the volumes of Litton, or of Palmer and Wordsworth (to name representatives of different theological schools), with those comprised in this volume, will illustrate the remark. From the Presbyterian point of view, Dr. Bannerman's work has of course a special interest and value. It is a fresh statement of our fundamental principles in their application to the whole range of questions; and it is carried through with an eye, not only to the permanent conditions of the discussion, but also to the form which recent controversies have assumed."

The Editor's best acknowledgments are due to the Very Rev. Principal Candlish for his kindness in undertaking the Preface to this work. He wishes also to express his warm thanks to the Rev. John Laing, Acting Librarian, New College, for the labour and pains bestowed by him upon the Index, and for occasional help in verifying the few references, to identify which it was necessary to travel beyond the shelves of Dr. Bannerman's own library.

In thus ending the task entrusted to him, the Editor cannot refrain from saying how very greatly the impression, strong as that was, left upon his mind by these Lectures, when he first had the privilege of listening to them a few years ago in the New College of Edinburgh, has been strengthened by a closer study of their contents. He has been led to appreciate, as he never did before, the depth and thoroughness and extent of a learning that never encumbers its possessor, that shows itself not in any purposeless parade of quotation and authority, but in the unfailing grasp taken of the whole question at issue in all its bearings, in the clearness and decision with which all that is central and essential in the controversy is singled out and separated from

what is subordinate or irrelevant, in the ease and certainty with which the argument is wielded. He has been taught afresh and more intelligently to recognise the union of high and rare qualities, not too often brought to bear together on this field of Theological discussion,—the unvarying fairness and courtesy to controversial opponents, the calm, judicial wisdom with which evidence is sifted and reasonings are summed up, the power and effect with which great leading principles of Divine truth are grasped, and established, and vindicated in their right to rule the controversy, the masterly precision and clearness of insight with which the lines are drawn round some of the most delicate and difficult questions in all Theology, the reverence for the Word of God. But of these things it may be more fitting that others should speak.

These Volumes will find acceptance, the Editor believes, with all who are competent to form a judgment regarding them, and who, whether agreeing or not with the positions maintained by the Author, love to see a great subject worthily handled. They will have a more powerful interest still, he is well assured, to many now scattered throughout almost all parts of Christendom, who trace some of their strongest and highest impulses in the work of the ministry to the Chair in the New College which Dr. Bannerman filled so long, who learned there, perhaps for the first time, something of the worth and meaning of Theology, and of the spirit in which the study of it ought to be pursued, who have cause to remember not only the weight and power of his public teaching, but words of wise and ready counsel and deeds of efficient help in times of private difficulty and questioning, to whom the written argument of these Volumes seems almost to carry a personal influence, and to whose ears the music of its grave and stately eloquence is deepened by the memories of a voice and a bearing not often equalled among men.

D. DOUGLAS BANNERMAN.

Abernyte House, Inchture,
October 1868.

PREFACE BY PRINCIPAL CANDLISH.

I HAVE been asked to introduce these Volumes to the Christian public, and I gladly consent to do so. They do not indeed require any introduction outside of themselves; nor, if they did, could mine be of much avail, for I cannot pretend to anything like such a systematic and scholarly acquaintance with the department of Theology to which they belong, as might give me a right to speak with authority. The book, therefore, as to its intrinsic merits, must speak for itself, so far as I am concerned; it will do so all the better for the brief analysis of its contents which Dr. Rainy has furnished. I may be allowed, however, to say that, whether exhaustively or suggestively, Dr. Bannerman seems to me to have mastered the entire field, not only in the way of a general survey, but in the way of insight also into all details.

Exhaustively or suggestively, I have said; for these would seem to be two different methods of professorial prelection. Of the two, the suggestive method is clearly the preferable one. To send students away under the impression that they have got all that needs to be got for solving every problem and settling every question in the branch of study to which they have been giving one or two years of attendance on professorial lectures, is a serious mistake on the part of the Chair, and a sore evil to its victims,—discovered often only when it is too late to have it remedied. No such fault can be found with these Lectures. But a special good can be found in them. They are exhaustive, in the right way of exhaustively mapping out the entire ground to be surveyed minutely and particularly; while at the same time they are not

exhaustive, but the reverse, as regards the actual surveying of the ground thus mapped out. They are suggestive, and highly suggestive, in themselves and in their references, on all questions of detail, while at the same time they bring out clearly and fully the entire doctrine as a whole, and the bearing of these detailed questions upon the entire doctrine as a whole.

But I may be allowed a few words about the Author, if not about this work of his.

I can testify, with the utmost confidence, to his being competent, and admitted on all hands to be competent, to give a fair and full representation of the theory of Church polity, all but unanimously adopted in Scotland at and after the Reformation, —not under influences from without, such as regal supremacy or papal dictation; but inwardly and directly from the study of the Divine Word, and the honest application of its principles to the problems of Divine Providence as they came up. For that is what we claim to be the characteristic of our Scottish Reformation,—that in all the departments of doctrine, worship, and government, it was no mere modification of the Romish system, in accommodation to altered circumstances, but a reconstruction of the Divine plan, freshly based on the old foundation.

For the exposition of the doctrine of the Church upon that footing, and in that view, Dr. Bannerman was eminently qualified. He was a close and thorough biblical student; and he was an authority in ecclesiastical history and law.

I can recall his first public and prominent service rendered to the Church in the years 1839–41, when it fell to him mainly to conduct a case of heresy, involving very delicate and difficult points in Theology. And I can recall also his valuable service rendered in connection with the gravest question raised in the course of our 'ten years' conflict,'—that of the Strathbogie interdicts. In both instances Dr. Bannerman won for himself the full confidence and esteem of the whole Church; and it was felt to be only a suitable acknowledgment of his worth and his work when he was called to occupy the professorial Chair.

Of his manner of occupying that Chair, I need not speak. But I must express the deep feeling of regret with which all parties in the Church received the tidings of his death, at the very time when he was coming forward more than his special professorial engagements had previously permitted, in the discussion of matters widely and deeply affecting the general interests of Christian peace and union in the Church catholic, as well as in our own branch of it. In that view, one is constrained to wonder, and stand in awe, and say, 'It is the Lord.'

R. S. C.

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ERRATA.

—o—

Vol. I. page 274, line 23 of footnote, *for* Propositions, *read* the Propositions.

Vol. I. page 372, last line, *for passim*, *read* cap. ix., *et passim.*

Vol. II. page 142, line 32, *for* fiant, *read* fiat (hæc oblatio).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Bible is a revelation from God of truths immediately bearing on the state by nature, and the recovery by divine grace, of individual men. But it is more than that: it is also a revelation of truths bearing on the character and condition of men formed into a society of believers, and constituting one collective body, holding together the faith of Christ. The difference between these two aspects in which the Bible may be regarded, marks the point of transition from the departments of Apologetical and Doctrinal Theology to the department on which we are now about to enter,—that, namely, of the nature, powers, and constitution of the Christian Church. To individual men, whether in a state of sin or a state of salvation, the Bible is a communication from God, telling them of truths and doctrines, through the belief and renewing influence of which they may individually be recovered from the spiritual ruin of the fall, and made partakers, under the Divine Spirit, of complete and everlasting redemption. But to the body of believers, not individually, but collectively, the Bible is also a communication from God, telling them of truths and doctrines, through the right appreciation of which they may be fashioned into a spiritual society, with divinely authorized powers and ordinances and office-bearers,—an outward and public witness for God on the earth, and an instrument for the edification of the people of Christ.

Perhaps there are few who confess Jesus Christ to be the Author and Finisher of their faith, who do not also confess, in one sense or other, that He is the Founder and Head of a society destined to embrace all His followers, and fitted to be of permanent

continuance. Men may differ widely as to their notions of the kind of community which Christ has actually established; but few, if any, will be found to deny that Christianity was designed to be something more than the religion of individuals, bound together by no tie, and gathered into no outward society. In its primary and most important aspect, indeed, the revelation of God contained in the Bible is a revelation to me individually. Its discoveries of sin and announcements of judgment, its intimations of grace and its proclamations of a Saviour, its offers of an atoning blood to expiate, and a regenerating Spirit to purge, transgression,—these are addressed to me individually; and if I deal with them at all, I must deal with them as if there were no other in the world except myself and God. Alone with God, I must realize the Bible as if it were a message from Him to my solitary self, singled out and separated from other men, and feeling my own individual responsibility in receiving or rejecting it. But the Bible does not stop here: it deals with man, not only as a solitary unit in his relation to God, but also as a member of a spiritual society, gathered together in the name of Jesus. It is not a mere system of doctrines to be believed and precepts to be observed by each individual Christian independently of others, and apart from others: it is a system of doctrines and precepts, designed and adapted for a society of Christians. This agreement and co-operation of men holding the same faith and the same Saviour is not an accidental or voluntary union which has grown up of itself: it is a union designed beforehand, appointed from the beginning by God, and plainly contemplated and required in every page of the New Testament Scriptures. There are precepts in the Bible addressed, not to believers separately, but to believers associated together into a corporate society; there are duties that are enjoined upon the body, and not upon the members of which it is composed; there are powers assigned to the community, to which the individuals of the community are strangers; there is a government, an order, a code of laws, a system of ordinances and officers described in Scripture, which can apply to none other than a collective association of Christians. Without the existence of a Church, or of a body of believers, as contradistinguished from believers individually, very much of what is contained in the Bible would be unintelligible, and without practical application.

There are two aspects in which the Church, as a *society* of believers, in contradistinction from *individual* believers, is represented in Scripture, that serve to place it in an important and solemn point of view.

I. In the first place, the Church is spoken of as "the body of Christ," in a sense in which the words cannot be applied to the individual believer.[1] It cannot be said of any individual Christian, however richly endowed with spiritual gifts from the Saviour, that he is "the body of Christ." But in some sense, not the same with but similar to that in which the human nature of Christ was His body during His life on earth, can the Church, and not individuals, be said to be His body now. And just as the indwelling of the Son of God in the human nature of Christ richly endowed and gloriously exalted that nature with all spiritual graces and gifts and powers unknown to any other person, so the indwelling of Christ in His Church, in a way and manner unknown to individual believers, exalts and endows the Church with gifts and graces and powers which no Christian individually possesses. The Church is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."[2]

II. In the second place, the Church is spoken of in Scripture as the residence or earthly dwelling-place of the Spirit, the Third Person of the glorious Godhead.[3] It is no doubt true that the Spirit of God dwells in each individual believer, making his soul and body His temple, and glorifying the place of His presence with all heavenly and sanctified graces. But, over and above this, and in a higher sense than can apply to any individual Christian, the Spirit of God makes His dwelling in the Church, enriching that Church with all the fulness of life and power and privilege, which no single believer could receive or contain. As the body of the Son of God, as the earthly dwelling-place of the Spirit of God, the Church more than the Christian—the society more than the individual—is set forth to us as the highest and most glorious embodiment and manifestation of Divine power and grace upon the earth. And it is in reference to the society, and not to the individuals of which it is composed—to the Church

[1] Eph. i. 23, iv. 12, v. 23–32; Col. i. 18, 24, iii. 15; 1 Cor. xii. 12 ff. 27.

[2] το πληρωμα του παντα ἐν πασι πληουμενου, Eph. i. 23. Comp. ἐν Αὐτω εὐδοκησε παν το πληρωμα κατοικησαι, Col. i. 19; ἐν Αὐτῳ κατοικει παν το πληρωμα της θεοτητος σωματικως, Col. ii. 9.

[3] Rom. viii. 9, 11, 16; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17, vi. 11, 15–17; Eph. ii. 18, 22, iv. 4. See the Greek in all these passages.

and not to its single members—that very much of the language of the Bible refers.

The field of discussion opened up by a consideration of the Bible, as a revelation of truths bearing on believers not individually, but as formed into a collective body and constituting the Church of Christ, is a very wide and important one. It embraces a vast variety of topics, many of them involving discussions the most delicate and difficult within the whole range of theology. It is a field which, in so far as regards a comprehensive and separate survey of it, is comparatively new and untrodden. It is indeed briefly adverted to in most of the ordinary systems of theology, and particular departments of it have been traversed, to a greater or less extent, on particular occasions of controversy; yet, as a whole, it has seldom been opened up at length, and systematically.

It was with no ordinary feelings of doubt and distrust in my own powers, that I first set myself to cope with this high argument. With that measure of ability which God has given me, and which the Church has called upon me to exercise in the Chair in this College to which the Doctrine of the Church belongs, I have endeavoured to open up the general principles of a subject, almost entirely new in academic prelections, and especially arduous.

I have found the task to be one beset with difficulties neither few nor small. Not the least of these has been the entire absence of any adequate guide—or often of any guide at all—to aid me in shaping my course and forming my opinions with respect to many of the most difficult and delicate questions connected with my subject. I have been compelled to take up these opinions very much at my own hand, and to become myself a learner before I could attempt to teach; and upon such points as these it would be the very reverse of wisdom to dogmatize.

I shall be more than rewarded for the time and labour spent upon this great and arduous subject, if I have been enabled, in however small a measure, to impart some knowledge of the truths, or to suggest some of the grand principles, or even to awaken some interest in the argument of a department in theology, a thorough acquaintance with which is so essential for those who hope to occupy, or who already fill, that honourable yet responsible place, held by those who are put in trust with the work of the ministry in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

PART I.—NATURE OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH AS DEFINED IN SCRIPTURE.

MANY, perhaps indeed most, of the controversies which have arisen in connection with ecclesiastical theology, are to be traced back to fundamental differences of opinion regarding the essential nature and character of that society which Christ has instituted. The different or opposite notions which men have professed to gather from Scripture, in regard to the origin and essential principles of the Christian Church, have necessarily led to conclusions widely different in regard to its functions, its authority, its ordinances, and its government. It is highly important, therefore, to lay down at the outset those scriptural principles as to the nature and character of the Church of Christ, which may prove to us guiding principles in our subsequent investigations into its powers, and the offices it is appointed to discharge. And the first question which naturally arises is regarding the meaning which ought to be attached to the word "Church." Different societies or associations of Christians are found claiming to themselves, and denying to others, the character and privileges of a Church of Christ; and opinions widely differing from each other are held as to the meaning of the designation. In such circumstances we must have recourse to the Word of God, in order that, by an examination of its statements, we may ascertain in what sense, or in what senses, the term Church is to be understood by us.

The word ἐκκλησια, which is translated Church in our version of the New Testament, in its primary meaning denotes any as-

sembly gathered together from a promiscuous multitude, whether it be or be not regularly organized, and whether it be for civil or ecclesiastical purposes. Examples both in classical and inspired writers are at hand to prove the extensive meaning of the term;[1] and the same wide signification belongs to the corresponding word in the Hebrew of the Old Testament.[2] In the application of the term to secular assemblies, we find it used to signify the city council, convened in an orderly manner by the magistrate for the determination of civil matters; as in Acts xix., where the town-clerk of Ephesus is represented as addressing the citizens: "If Demetrius, and the craftsmen who are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined (*ἐν τῇ ἐννομῳ ἐκκλησιᾳ*) in a lawful convention." In a similar application of the term to secular assemblies, we find it employed to denote a riotous assemblage of people, gathered together in a disorderly crowd, for purposes of tumult; as in the same chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when it is said, in regard to the mob who assaulted Paul and his companions: "Some therefore cried one thing, and some another, for (*ἡ ἐκκλησια*) the assembly or crowd was confused." With this wide use of the term, as applied to secular assemblies, it is plain that the precise signification of the word, in any given instance, is to be gathered from the manner in which it is employed, and from the context. The same is true in regard to the use of the term *ἐκκλησια*, when applied to sacred or ecclesiastical assemblies of people. Here, too, the range of its application is a wide one; and the precise meaning of the word, in any particular case, must be ascertained from the general sense of the passage and from the context. There are five different but closely allied meanings of the term "Church" to be gathered from Scripture.

I. The word Church signifies the whole body of the faithful,

[1] See Schleusner, *Lexicon Nov. Test. in voc. ἐκκλησια.*

[2] קָהָל (from קָהַל = in *Hiph.* to call together), "congregation," "assembly," LXX. *ἐκκλησια* and *συναγωγη*, twice *το πληθος*, and once *συνεδριον*; and עֵדָה (from יָעַד = to appoint, and in *Niph.* to come together), "congregation," "assembly," LXX. *συναγωγη*, once *παρεμβολη*, and once *ἐπισυστασις*; מִקְרָא, again (from קָרָא = *καλεω*), "convocation," "assembly," LXX. *κλητος*, *ἐπικλητος*, is always restricted, in the Old Testament, to an assembly for religious purposes.

whether in heaven or on earth, who have been or shall be spiritually united to Christ as their Saviour.

There are many examples in Scripture of the use of the term in this wide sense. The first occasion on which the word occurs in the New Testament is one of these, when our Lord declares that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church,"[1]—language which plainly refers to the society or association of all those who had believed or should believe in Him. All history proves that particular and local Churches may fall away from the faith into complete and final apostasy. The promise of our Lord can apply to no special community except the universal Church of Christ, invisible to human eye, and known only to His, consisting of all true believers, and of none else. Again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we are told that Christ "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."[2] That society of men for whom Christ died, and who shall, each one of them, be presented at last holy and without spot before God, is plainly a society the members of which no man can number or declare by any external mark; which can be restricted to no geographical locality, and can be recognised by no features visible to the outward eye. It is the society of the elect, and not identical with any outward Church or Churches of whatsoever name. It is the spiritual and invisible Church of the Redeemer, known only to Himself, of which Scripture thus speaks; and in entire accordance with this use of the term Church in Scripture to denote a society comprehending the whole body of the elect, and none else, are other names or titles given to it in the New Testament. The Church is at one time spoken of under the mysterious name of the Bride or Spouse of Christ,[3]—an expression which cae apply to no local or particular Church—to no society, indeed, at all, measured and recognised by the eye of man under any form, or under all forms, of Christian profession,—but must be intended to mark out those, and those only, who have been espoused to Christ through the holy union of His Spirit with theirs. At another time it is spoken of as "the temple of the Holy Ghost,"

[1] Matt. xvi. 18. [2] Eph. v. 25–27.
[3] Canticles ii. 10 ff, iv. 7. 9 ff.; Eph. v. 32; Rev. xxi. 2, 9, xxii. 17.

"a spiritual house," "an habitation of God through the Spirit,"[1] —language plainly designed to mark out a society defined by no outward limits, but identical with the whole number of spiritual Christians of whatsoever society throughout the world, who have been quickened by the Spirit.

And, finally, the Church is described as "the body of Christ," all the members of which are united to Him as the Head of life and influence and grace to them,[2]—a description not applicable to any outward body of professing Christians made up of any or all communions, but only to be realized in that great multitude which no man has seen or numbered, who make up the invisible Church of the Redeemer, and whose names are written in heaven. In these passages, and in many others, we have a society defined and described, which embraces the whole number of Christ's elect, and none but they,—a society not identical with any known on earth, and not to be recognised by any local names or notes or boundaries,—a society marked out from any other by the possession of certain high and mysterious privileges, and standing in a very close and peculiar relation to Christ, but unseen and unknown of man,—a society whose members are unreckoned and unobserved on earth, but all of whom are numbered and known in heaven. Such is the *invisible* Church of the Redeemer. "The catholic or universal Church," says the Confession of Faith, "which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."[3]

II. The term Church is made use of in Scripture to denote the whole body throughout the world of those that outwardly profess the faith of Christ.

Over and above that unseen society, consisting of the whole number of the elect, who are spiritually united to Christ, there is set forth to us in Scripture another society, externally con-

[1] Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 5.

[2] 1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. iii. 6, iv. 12, 16; Col. i. 18, ii. 19.

[3] Conf. chap. xxv. 1. [Caput in Illo homine agnoscimus, qui natus est de Maria Virgine, etc. Hoc est caput Ecclesiæ. Corpus hujus capitis Ecclesia est, non quæ hoc loco est, sed et quæ hoc loco et per totum orbem terrarum; nec illa quæ hoc tempore, sed ab ipso Abel usque ad eos qui nascituri sunt usque in finem et credituri in Christum, totus populus sanctorum ad unam civitatem pertinentium, quæ civitas corpus est Christi, cui caput est Christus. Aug. in Psalm xc. 1. *Opera*, ed. Migne, tom. iv. Pars ii. p. 1159.]

nected with Christ, and standing out visibly before the eyes of the world. This is the visible Church of Christ, known to men by the outward profession of faith in Him, and by the practice of those Church ordinances and observances which He has appointed for His worshippers. It is not to be identified with the invisible Church, for men may belong to the one society, who do not truly belong to the other; and the relation in which the one body stands to Christ is different from the relation occupied by the other. Neither are the two to be wholly placed in opposition to each other; for they form, not so much two separate Churches, as one Church under two distinct and different characters or aspects,—the invisible Church being spiritually united to Christ, the visible being externally united to Him for the sake of the other. This outward society of professing Christians is frequently spoken of and delineated in Scripture under the term Church. It is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, when it is said that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."[1] It is spoken of in the Epistle to the Corinthians, when mention is made by Paul of the outward provision which God has made for the order and government and edification of the Church: "And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."[2] It is spoken of again, in reference to the same matter, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, when the same inspired writer says that Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."[3] In such passages, it is plain that a visible society of professing Christians is referred to, known and marked out among men by certain outward ordinances and observances peculiar to them, but not to be confounded with the invisible Church made up of the elect. Under the outward form of the visible Church, the invisible society of true believers may to a great extent lie concealed; but under that outward form there may be multitudes also, not truly members of the body of Christ, and only joined to Him by external profession and external ordinances.

That a Church visible and outward, known and recognised by the profession of the faith of Christ and the administration of

[1] Acts ii. 47. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 28. [3] Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Christ's ordinances, and yet not to be identified with the invisible society of true believers, is acknowledged and described in Scripture, may be distinctly ascertained, from a careful consideration of the various acceptations in which the word Church is made use of in the New Testament. But if additional evidence were desired on this point, it would be found in various parables of our Lord, in which He more especially describes the visible Church under the expressive title of "the kingdom of heaven." "The kingdom of heaven," said our Lord on one occasion, "is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."[1] This separation of the good from the evil in His kingdom or visible Church is to take place, as He expressly adds, "at the end of the world," when "the angels shall sever the wicked from among the just,"—the visible Church in this world being made up, in the meantime, of a multitude of true and feigned believers under one common profession, and yet being recognised by Christ as His Church. "The kingdom of heaven," said our Lord in another parable, "is like unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." And was this introduction of the tares into the visible Church inconsistent with its character as a Church, and immediately to be remedied by their removal? "Nay," continues the parable, "lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."[2] To exactly the same effect is that remarkable similitude, in which our Lord likens the relation between Himself and His Church to the union subsisting between the vine and the branches. "I am the true vine," said He, "and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered."[3] It is plain that in such language our Lord recognised a twofold union to Himself,—one, a living union, like that of the fruitful branch in the vine; the other, a dead or mere external union, such as the unfruitful branch in the vine,

[1] Matt. xiii. 47–49. [2] Matt. xiii. 24–30, 36–43. [3] John xv. 1–8.

that was cast forth and withered; and such precisely is the two-fold connection with Christ, exemplified in the case respectively of the invisible and the visible Church. Those who are united to the Saviour by a living union,—unseen indeed of men, but known to Him,—constitute that society of believers spoken of in Scripture as the spiritual or invisible Church of Christ. Those, on the other hand, who are united to the Saviour by an external union of outward profession and outward privileges, known and seen of men, numbering among them the true believers in Christ, but not exclusively made up of true believers, constitute the visible Church. "The visible Church," says the Confession of Faith, "which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."[1]

III. The term Church is frequently employed in Scripture to denote the body of believers in any particular place, associated together in the worship of God.

This third meaning of the word lies on the very surface of Scripture, and requires almost no illustration. Even in the case of two or three professing Christians, met together for prayer and worship, whether publicly or in private houses, the term ἐκκλησια is applied to them in the New Testament; and that, too, before such a congregation might be organized, by having regular office-bearers and minister appointed over them. In the Acts of the Apostles we are told that Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every Church" as they journeyed through Lystra and Iconium and Antioch,[2]—language which plainly recognises the congregation of professing believers as a Church, even previously

[1] Conf. chap. xxv. 2. [Comp. also the *Second Book of Discipline*. chap. i. 1. "The Kirk of God is sumtymes largelie takin for all them that professe the Evangill of Jesus Christ, and so it is a Company and Fellowship not onely of the Godly, but also of Hypocrites professing alwayis outwardly ane true Religion; uther Tymes it is takin for the Godlie and Elect onlie."—Dunlop's *Collection of Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Books of Discipline, etc. of Publick Authority in the Church of Scotland*, Edinr. 1722, vol. ii. p. 759. "Ecclesia consistit in illis personis in quibus est notitia vera et confessio fidei et veritatis."—Nicolas de Lyra (ob. 1340), quoted by Melanchthon in the *Apol. Conf. Aug.* chap. 4.

[2] Acts xiv. 23.

to the ordination of office-bearers among them. The body of believers in any particular place associating together for worship, whether numerous or not, have the true character of a Church of Christ. Thus the Apostle Paul on some occasions recognises as a Church the meeting of believers in the private house of some one or other of his converts. "Greet," says he in the Epistle to the Romans, "Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; likewise greet the Church that is in their house."[1] In his Epistle to the Corinthians the same apostle sends to his converts, first, the salutation of the Churches of Asia, and second, the salutation of the congregation or Church assembling in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. "The Churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the Church that is in their house."[2] In like manner, in the Epistle to the Colossians, we hear, "Salute Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house;" and in the Epistle to Philemon, "To the Church in thy house: grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ;"[3]—so numerous and distinct are the testimonies to this third meaning of the term Church, as a company of professing Christians, however small, associated together in any one place for the worship and service of God.

IV. The word Church is applied in the New Testament to a number of congregations associated together under a common government.

It is not necessary to suppose that the term "Church," when used in reference to the society of professing Christians belonging to one locality, was limited to a single congregation meeting in one building. On the contrary, there seems to be the strongest evidence for assuming that a plurality of congregations, meeting for worship in separate houses, but connected together under one ecclesiastical order, was designated by the general term of *a* Church. It is not necessary at this stage to enter at length into the discussion of a point, which will more naturally fall to be argued when we come to speak of the government of the Church. It may be enough at present simply to indicate the kind of argument by which it can be shown that the word Church is not restricted in its application to a single congregation, but is used in reference to more than one connected together under one common ecclesiastical arrangement. This will sufficiently appear if we

[1] Rom. xvi. 3–5. [2] 1 Cor. xvi. 19. [3] Col. iv. 15; Philem. 23.

take the case of the converts at Jerusalem, who are spoken of under the general name of "the Church at Jerusalem," but who, nevertheless, must have constituted more than one congregation in that city. There is enough recorded in the Acts of the Apostles regarding the vast number of Christians at Jerusalem, to forbid the supposition that they could have met all together in one congregation, or under one roof, for their ordinary religious services. On one occasion—that of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—we are expressly told that "there were added" to the number of believers previously at Jerusalem "about three thousand souls." After this it is declared that "*daily* the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved."[1] At a later period still, when Peter had preached after healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, we are told that "many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men (*ἀνδρων*) was about five thousand,"[2]—a number evidently exclusive of women. Even this vast number of converts was still further augmented; for in the next chapter we are told that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."[3] And at a subsequent date we have the testimony of James, speaking to Paul respecting the converts at Jerusalem: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (literally, myriads, *ποσαι μυριαδες*) of Jews there are which believe."[4] With such facts as these before us regarding the multitudes of converts at Jerusalem, it seems impossible to maintain that the Church there consisted of no more than one solitary congregation, worshipping together under a single roof. No one building could have contained the many thousands of believers that crowded Jerusalem at that time in the fulness of a Pentecostal harvest; nor is it possible, except under the influence of some misleading theory, to believe that they formed no more than one congregation. The conclusion, then, seems to be inevitable, that when we read of *the* Church at Jerusalem, we find the term applied, not to a single congregation of believers, but to a plurality of congregations, connected together as one body or Church by means of a common government. An examination of the cases of the Church at Corinth and the Church of Ephesus would lead to a similar conclusion, and would justify us in affirming that the word Church in these instances also denotes, not a single congregation of worshippers, but several con-

[1] Acts ii. 41, 47. [2] Acts iv. 4. [3] Acts v. 14. [4] Acts xxi. 20.

gregations associated together by vicinity of place, but still more by a common ecclesiastical rule and order. I do not stop at present to inquire under what form of government separate congregations were thus connected together. The fact that they were so is all that is necessary for us to know in assigning to the term Church this fourth signification.

V. The word Church is applied, in the New Testament, to the body of professing believers in any place, as represented by their rulers and office-bearers.

The principle of representation is fully and frequently recognised in Scripture as having a place in the dispensations of God, as well as in the ordinary transactions of life; nor can it seem anything new to find the body of believers in any given place represented by their office-bearers, and the term primarily descriptive of the one applied to the other. An example of this application of the term Church is to be found in Matthew xviii., when our Lord is laying down the principles on which a Christian ought to proceed in the case of a brother who has trespassed against him. If, after dealing with the offender as to his fault, first in private with himself alone, and then in the presence of two or three witnesses, he shall still neglect to hear and acknowledge his offence, the command of our Lord is to "tell it to the Church." In such an injunction our Lord referred to the synagogue Court known and established among the Jews, which had its elders and officers for the decision of such matters of discipline; and in the expression "the Church," which He made use of, the Jews who heard Him *must* have understood the authorized rulers, as distinct from the ruled, to be the parties who were to determine in such controversies. An impartial consideration of this text in its connection seems to justify the assertion that the word Church is in Scripture, among its other meanings, employed to denote the rulers or office-bearers of the Christian society.

Such are the five different senses in which the word Church is used in the New Testament Scriptures; and it is not unimportant to remark the connection between them, and the order in which they stand related to each other. The primary and normal idea of the Church, as set forth in Scripture, is unquestionably that of a body of men spiritually united to Christ, and, in consequence of that union, one with each other, as they are one with Him. From this fundamental idea of the universal invisible Church of

Christ, all the others are derived. Add to this *first* idea of a Church, as indicated in Scripture, an outward provision of government, ordinances, and office-bearers, appointed for the purpose of ministering to the edification of its members, and you have the visible Church, as laid down in the New Testament,—an outward society formed upon the inward and spiritual one, and established and maintained in the world for its benefit. Add to this *second* scriptural idea of a Church the further notion of locality, so that instead of being viewed in its universal character as extending over all the world, it is viewed in its local character as existing in certain places, and limited to them,—and you learn the *third* meaning of the term as found in the New Testament, namely, a body of professing Christians assembling together in one place for the worship and service of God. Further still, annex to this third notion of the Church, as existing in particular localities and congregations, the additional idea of co-operation and union under some one form of ecclesiastical government, and you arrive at the *fourth* meaning of the word Church in Scripture,—a number of particular congregations associated together under one Church order and authority. And lastly, to this fourth idea of a Church conjoin the principle of representation, so largely developed both in the dispensations of God and in the arrangements of civil society, and you reach the *fifth* and final use of the term as found in the Bible, namely, to denote a society or societies of professing Christians, as represented by their office-bearers and rulers. From the single germ of one believer or of several believers, vitally united to a Saviour, and in the enjoyment of the privileges belonging to that union, it is not difficult to trace the Church of Christ under all the different yet closely allied characters in which it is defined and delineated in Scripture.[1]

It is of great importance, at the outset, to fix with some measure of precision the different significations in which the word Church is used in Scripture, because of the opposite opinions entertained

[1] Compare with these five meanings of the term Church those given by Mr. Palmer, who may be taken as a representative of the English High Church party: *Treatise on the Church of Christ*, Lond. 1838, vol. i. pp. 4. 5. [Also Wordsworth's *Theoph. Angl.*, Lond. 1863, Part i. chaps. i. ii. iii. Nitzsch, *System der christl. Lehre*, 6te Ausg. § 187: Die Kirche ist zuerst, und ehe sie etwas anders ist, die Gemeinde der Geheiligten, und insofern selbst ein Gegenstand des Glaubens, u. s. w. Comp. Melanchthon in *Apol. Conf. Aug.* art. iv.: Ecclesia est *principaliter* societas fidei et Spiritus Sancti in cordibus.]

by different parties as to this matter,—opinions which cannot fail to bear directly or indirectly upon every step in our subsequent discussions. For example, the Romanist sets himself in opposition to the first of those meanings which we have found to be attached in Scripture to the term Church. He is prepared to deny altogether, or, if not to deny abstractly, yet practically to set aside, the idea of an invisible Church as the primary and fundamental one, and to substitute that of a visible Church in its stead. Bossuet, in his *Variations of the Protestant Churches*, goes so far as to charge upon the Reformers the invention of the idea of a Church invisible, with a view to meet the alleged difficulty, so often urged by Romanists, of the visible existence of no Church, identical in principles and character with the Reformed before the Reformation.[1] And more recent Romanist controversialists, if they do not in so many terms deny the existence of a Church invisible, endeavour to substitute in its stead that of a visible body as the leading and normal idea of the Christian society. Now, concede to Romanists the position they are so anxious to assume, and deny that there is an invisible and spiritual Church at all, or at least that this is the primary and leading idea of the Christian society; grant that the outward and visible Church is the source from which the inward and invisible is derived,—and you open up the way for some of the worst and most characteristic errors of Popery. That single admission with respect to the fundamental idea of the Christian society, prepares the way for making communion with an outward Church take the place of a spiritual reality, and substituting the external charm of priestly arts and sacramental grace for the living union of the soul to the Saviour.[2]

[1] Bossuet, *Variations of the Protestant Churches*, Dublin 1836, vol. ii. pp. 281, 290, 2d ed.

[2] "Nostra autem sententia est," says Bellarmine, after reviewing the opinions of the Reformers regarding the Church visible and invisible, "Ecclesiam unam tantum esse, non duas, et illam unam et veram esse *catum hominum ejusdem Christianæ fidei professione, et eorundem Sacramentorum communione colligatum, sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac præcipue unius Christi in terris Vicarii Romani Pontificis.* Ex qua definitione," he most justly adds, "facile colligi potest qui homines ad Ecclesiam pertineant, qui vero ad eam non pertineant." Bell. *Opera*, tom. ii. lib. iii. chaps. ii. xi. xii., where he distinctly denies the existence of an invisible church, and argues against it at length. See also Möhler, *Symbolism*, Robertson's Transl., vol. ii. pp. 5 f. 108; 2d ed. [Comp. also Nitzsch's *protestantische Beantwortung der Symbolik Möhler's*, pp. 232, 233; Schleiermacher's *christliche Glaube*, Berlin 1830, Band i. p. 145, 2te Ausg.]

Or, take another example from the case of the Independents. Independents deny the second of the five meanings which we have found ascribed to the word Church in Scripture. They repudiate altogether the idea of a visible Church, sustaining a real, although external, relation to Christ, and composed of His professing people. Now, concede to the Independents this position, and set aside the idea of a visible Church with its outward order and privileges, and you concede to them at the same time all that is necessary to determine in their favour the question regarding the character and qualifications of Church members, and to establish their principles on the subject of "pure communion." In like manner the Independents reject the fourth and fifth meanings of the word Church. They deny that it is ever found in Scripture to signify either a plurality of congregations under one government, or simply the representatives or office-bearers of the congregation as contradistinguished from the congregation itself. Here, too, the difference of opinion in regard to the use and meaning of the term in Scripture is a fundamental one, giving rise to other and no less fundamental differences at future stages of the discussion. Admit the narrow position taken up by the Independents in regard to the true meaning and nature of a Church as defined in Scripture, restrict the term to one or other of the two significations of either the invisible Church at large, or a single congregation of believers in a particular locality, and you, in fact, concede every principle that is necessary for them to establish their views as to the form of the Church, and the nature of its government. There cannot be, in fact, a more important question, or one in the determination of which more fundamental principles are involved, than that in regard to the real nature of the Christian Church, as delineated in Scripture; and if we have succeeded in discovering the meaning of the term according to New Testament usage, we shall have done much to prepare the way for our future discussions.[1]

[1] Principal Cunningham's *Works*, Edin. 1863, vol. ii. pp. 9–20. Apollonius, *Consideratio Quarund. Controv.* etc., Lond. 1644, cap. iii. pp. 27–51; Engl. Transl., Lond. 1645, *A Consideration*, etc., chap. iii. pp. 24–43. Mastricht, *Theologia Theoretico-Practica*, lib. vii. cap. i.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH A DIVINE AND SPIRITUAL INSTITUTION.

ALTHOUGH it is with the Church invisible,—the whole body of the elect vitally united to the Saviour,—that the idea of a Church begins, yet, in proceeding to investigate into the form, ordinances, and government of the Christian society, we shall find it necessary to view the Church mainly, if not exclusively, in its character as a visible society. To the Church visible belong the privileges, the character, the order, about which it is our duty to inquire. Our future discussions, therefore, will consist in an examination of the nature, powers, and ordinances of the Christian society as an outward and visible institute, standing in a certain external relation to Christ,—whether you regard it as universal or local, as an association made up of many congregations under one government, or an association represented by its office-bearers and rulers.

What, then, are the primary characteristics of the Christian society, made up of the professing disciples of the Saviour in this world?

I. In the first place, the Church is a Divine institution, owing its origin not to man, but to Christ, and associated together not in consequence of human arrangement, but by Christ's appointment.

No doubt there is a foundation laid in the very nature of the religion which Christ came to promulgate, for the union of His disciples in one body or society. The faith which each man holds for the salvation of his own soul is a faith which joins him to every other believer. The close and mysterious union which is constituted by faith between him and his Saviour, is a union that connects him through that Saviour with every other Christian. In becoming one with Christ, he becomes at the same time, in a certain sense, one with all who are Christ's. The spiritual fellowship that a believer enjoys with his Redeemer, is not a solitary or

a selfish joy, but one which he cannot possess alone, or except in common with other believers. It is the very nature, therefore, of the Gospel to be not a solitary religion, but a social one. When Christ, through the mighty operation of His Spirit, brings a sinner into reconciliation and communion with Himself, He ushers him also into the fellowship of reconciliation and communion with all other Christians. When the work of grace is done upon the soul of man, and the barriers of separation between him and his Saviour are cast down, and the sinner who was afar off is brought near to God, the very same work of grace removes the obstacles that hindered his union with other men; and in the fellowship of one faith and one Lord he discovers a new and mightier bond of attachment and union to his fellow-believers. Were there no positive command or appointment, therefore, requiring Christians to unite together and to form on earth a society joined together by the profession of the same faith, the very nature of Christianity would force such a result. In the profession of it in common, men would find themselves insensibly drawn to other believing men with a power not to be resisted; and in the bonds of the same Saviour and the same Spirit they would feel and own a nearer tie than that of kindred, and a holier relationship than one of blood. In the common joys and sorrows which Christians, and none but Christians, share,—in the one faith and one Saviour in which together they rejoice,—in the same hopes and fears, the same sin escaped, and the same salvation won, in which they participate, there is a union of the most intimate kind produced and cemented, which is not with them a matter of choice, but a matter of inevitable necessity.

We may assert, therefore, that that Christian society which we call the Church of Christ is a society framed by Divine appointment, even did we see in it nothing more than a body of men brought together by the constraint of the same faith and same affections wrought in them by the Spirit of God. But there is much more than this intimated in Scripture, on which we ground the assertion that the Church of Christ is a divinely instituted society. There are express commands in Scripture, leaving the believer no alternative in the matter, and requiring him to unite together with other believers in the outward and public profession of his faith before the world. He is not left at liberty to hide that faith within his own heart, and himself to

remain alone and separated from his fellow-believers. It is the office of the Christian society to be a witness, by means of an outward and public profession, for Christ on the earth; and it is not a matter of choice, but of express obligation, with a Christian man to join with others in that public profession. The command is "to confess Christ before men;"[1] and upon the ground of that command, then, is laid the foundation of a society, each member of which is called upon, whether he will or will not, to lift up a public testimony for his Saviour jointly with other believers; and that public profession is one to be made not merely with the lips, uniting with others in a common declaration of the faith believed. The outward ordinances of the Christian society are so framed and devised as to be themselves a significant profession of faith on the part of those who join in them; and communion in ordinances is with Christians not a matter of choice, but of express command. Christ has judged it proper to appoint that His disciples shall be solemnly received into His Church by the initiatory rite of baptism; so that the very entrance of life, or, at all events, the admission into the Christian society, shall be itself a public testimony to Him. He has enjoined the public and open commemoration of the central and most characteristic doctrine of His faith, by the celebration, at stated intervals, of the Lord's Supper; and as often as the first day of the week returns, the disciples are commanded "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," but to unite in the outward and joint worship of the Saviour. In short, in the whole divinely appointed institutions and ordinances of the Christian society we see the provision made for, and the obligation laid upon, His disciples to be joined together into one outward body, and to form a common society of professing believers. That community is one, therefore, of Divine institution; and in the duty laid upon them, not as a matter of choice, but of express command, to become members of it, we see the ordinance of God for the existence and permanent establishment of a Church on earth. A solitary Christian is seen to be a contradiction in terms, if you view merely his faith as a principle of affinity naturally destined to draw to it the faith of other believers. A solitary Christian is worse than a contradiction, he is an anomaly, standing out against the express institution of God, which has appointed the fellowship of believers in one Church,

[1] Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8; John xii. 42; Rom. x. 9.

and made provision in its outward ordinances for their union and edification. The Christian society is a kingdom, set up by express Divine appointment, and differs from every other society on earth in this remarkable fact, that the builder and maker of it is God.

The institution of a society by Christ under the name of a Church, and the establishment and permanent continuance of that society as a Divine institution in the midst of this world, is a fact of fundamental importance in all our future inquiries. That fact stands opposed to the views of two distinct classes of men, who, differing in their opinion as to the origin and nature of the Christian society, yet combine in denying or setting aside its claims to be regarded as of Christ, and owing its appointment to a Divine authority.

1*st*. There are those who regard the Christian Church simply as a human society, owing its origin and establishment to voluntary agreement among its members.

Of course the idea of a merely voluntary association of Christians, brought together by the common belief of the same doctrines and the common practice of the same precepts, is totally opposed to the notion of a Divine institution, claiming to be of God, and appealing to His authority for its existence and outward establishment on the earth. If the principles already laid down are correct, the theory which makes the Church to be a merely human and voluntary association of Christians must come very far short indeed of what the statements of Scripture demand. No doubt there is in the very nature of Christianity, viewed as a system of truth and duty, apart from any mention of a Christian Church, enough to have laid the foundations of a society voluntarily brought together among the men who should have embraced it. In the fellowship of one faith uniting them to each other, and separating them from the rest of the world,—in the observance of the same worship and religious ordinances as a distinguishing mark of their Christianity, —there was enough, even without an express appointment to that effect, to have gathered the Christians of the early ages into one body, and to have led them voluntarily to unite themselves into a distinct society. More than that may perhaps be conceded to those who view the Christian Church as nothing beyond a voluntary association. Three things seem essential to the very idea of

a society, whatever be its character or proposed objects. Men brought voluntarily together into any association are necessarily led, for the purpose of order and the better attainment of the common aim that unites them, to appoint officers of some kind or other, to enact laws or regulations for the transaction of business, and to exercise the right of admission or exclusion in regard to members. All this is implied in the very nature of a regular and organized society, whether voluntary or not; and no community can long exist without it. It may be granted, then, in the case of the Christian society, that the power of a common faith, and the affinity of a common worship, would have been enough, without express Divine appointment, to have brought the believers into one; and further, that the very necessities of the society so constituted would have led them to adopt a form of order and government for it, apart from a positive institution by Christ. But all this furnishes no presumption against the fact of the positive appointment of the Christian society by Christ. Over and above the general tendency of the Gospel to become a social system, and over and above the general sanction of a Christian society implied in that tendency, Christ expressly laid down the main principles of order and government for the formation of His Church. He did not wait for the historical development of the Christian society, or leave His disciples to organize for themselves its system of government and office-bearers and laws: He laid upon His disciples the express injunction to meet together in His name; and in order the better to enforce it, annexed the promise, that when they were thus assembled, He would be in the midst of them to bless them and to do them good.[1] He commended to them the duty of confessing Him before men; and the more surely to prevent mistake, appointed certain public ordinances, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, through which that confession was to be made. He warned them "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together;"[2] and, to provide against uncertainty and misapprehension, He appointed one day in seven for this meeting, and instituted the ordinance of public worship for their observance. He commissioned the first office-bearers in His Church, He gave them the power of ruling, and He prescribed the terms for the admission of members. In all this there is evinced or implied

[1] Matt. xviii. 20; Exod. xx. 24. [2] Heb. x. 25.

the positive institution of a society by Christ Himself, having from Him a Divine authority. The voluntary power of association, implied in Christianity as a social system, is *there*, and is not by any means to be denied or overlooked; but, over and above that, the Christian society has the sanction and authority of a Divine appointment.

2*d*. There are those who regard the Christian Church as a society created by the State, owing its form and existence to those regulations which the State may enact in regard to it.

The Erastian theory of the Church is no less directly opposed to the claims of the Church as a Divine institution than the theory of a merely voluntary association. If, however, the principles already enunciated be correct, they may absolve us from the necessity of entering into details in the consideration of such a system. If there be warrant in Scripture for asserting that Christ has not merely lent a general sanction to the formation of a Christian society among His followers, but, as if to prevent the possibility of mistake, has specified in His own words Himself, or by His inspired servants, its office-bearers, its laws, and its ordinances, then *this* is enough to set aside by anticipation the Erastian scheme. In virtue of the appointment of its Divine Head, the Church has an existence, an authority, a government, totally independent of any power which it may or may not derive from the State; and the Church actually exercised the rights resulting from its Divine institution, and conferred by Christ, both in the times of the apostles and in subsequent ages, when it received no gift from the State except the gift of persecution and of blood. It is not necessary, at this stage of the discussion, to anticipate the inquiry which will afterwards meet us, as to the extent of the power or the form of government appointed by Christ for the Christian society. It is enough for our present argument to know that some kind of authority does belong to the Church in virtue of its original appointment by our Lord; that as it existed at first independently of the favour of the State, and in the face of its hostility, so it may continue to exist without any external connection or support; and that, for all the purposes on account of which it was established, it has powers complete and entire within itself, the original gift and permanent endowment of its Head. As a Divine institution, designed for a continued existence on earth, the Church is divinely equipped with all the

powers necessary for its own being and welfare, without owing anything to man. Without doing more than merely glance at the argument at present, it is enough to say that the Erastian theory proceeds upon the mistake of identifying the Church and State, and denying those essential differences between them, which demonstrate them to be distinct and separate ordinances of God, having each an independent existence. Apart altogether from the direct evidence we have in Scripture for the Divine institution of the Church, as a society owing nothing to the State and everything to Christ, the differences between the two prove them to be independent of each other. They differ in their origin, in their objects, and in the means by which those objects are attained. They differ in their origin,—the State being the ordinance of God as universal sovereign, and appointed for all nations whether Christian or not; the Church being the ordinance of Christ as Mediator, and appointed only for those nations among whom Christianity is professed. They differ in their objects,—the State being intended to advance directly the secular interests of the nation, and only indirectly to promote its spiritual well-being; the Church, on the contrary, being designed directly to further the spiritual interests of its members, and only indirectly to contribute to their temporal or secular wellbeing. They differ in their means for attaining the ends they have respectively in view,—the State being armed with the power of the sword for securing its object; the Church, on the other hand, being armed with weapons not carnal but spiritual. These, and other essential differences between the Church and the State, evince that they are separate and independent institutions of God, and that the one cannot owe its existence or authority to the other.

So much, then, for the general fact that the Christian society is a Divine institution, owing its existence not to man, but to Christ, and not merely a voluntary association, or the creature of civil appointment.

II. In the second place I remark, the Church of Christ is a spiritual institution; or, in other words, in its primary character it is a spiritual instrumentality for working out the spiritual good of man.

The Christian Church which Christ established on the earth before He left it, is the last of the dispensations of God; and, in

a peculiar sense, it is the dispensation of the Spirit. The earthly and carnal elements of former dispensations were step by step removed, in order to make way for one more spiritual and inward, and fitted to minister, by a more entirely spiritual agency, to the souls of men. The era of the Christian Church is emphatically that of the manifestation of the Spirit; and the administration of the Church is, in its primary character, a spiritual one. No doubt, in the New Testament Church, there are still found outward ordinances and an outward service,—an external provision made by rites and solemnities, that minister to the senses, for the edification of the body of Christ. Perhaps it is necessarily implied in the very condition of sense and sight in which Christians are in this world, that the Church should not be wholly without such external provision, and that the Spirit of Christ should minister to our spirits, not directly, but through the medium of the outward word and the outward ordinance; but in its main character, the administration of the Spirit through the Church is a spiritual one, to the exclusion of observances wholly outward, and influences purely external. The written word is no doubt an outward sign, speaking, in the first instance, to the eye; but it is the truth in the letter, and not the letter itself—that is, the spiritual instrument—that operates upon the soul. The external ordinance of Baptism or the Lord's Supper is no doubt an outward provision, ministering, in the first instance, to the senses; but it is not the sensible signs themselves, but the thing signified, that becomes, in the hand of the Spirit, the spiritual seal upon the soul. Even in the use of outward ordinances, the Church employs an instrumentality not wholly outward, but one capable of exerting a spiritual power upon the conscience and the heart. The ordinance is but the avenue through which the Spirit of God more powerfully reaches to the spirit of man. There is no virtue and no power in the outward action or the sensible sign in itself, and apart from the Spirit of God, conveyed through it to the human soul. Even in the employment of an external provision for the good of her members, the Church does not employ a mere external power; her primary influence is an influence of a spiritual kind, conveyed through the channel of outward ordinances; and her great ministration is, when the Spirit in the ordinance meets with the spirit in the heart, and they become one in the believer. It is, then, the distinguishing characteristic of the Church in these

latter days, that her administration is spiritual in its nature and its aims; that although making use of outward ordinances, the influence operating upon the soul is not outward, but spiritual; and that the administration of this kingdom is altogether different from that of the kingdoms of the world.

The standing ordinance of a spiritual Church in the world, distinct in its origin, in its objects, in its instrumentality, from the kingdoms of this world, is the grand and public lesson taught by God as to the fundamental distinction between things civil and things spiritual. To draw the line of demarcation between the province of the one and the other, is the great problem that involves in it the question of freedom of conscience on the one side, and the rights of the State on the other,—the spiritual liberty of the Church, and the legitimate authority of the civil magistrate,—the things that belong unto God, and the things that belong unto Cæsar. The grand fact, that Christ has instituted a spiritual society on the earth, and destined it to be perpetual, is one never to be lost sight of, as affording a solution, and the only possible solution, of these questions. The identification of this spiritual society in any manner or degree with the civil society, the annulling or confounding of the essential distinction between the Christian Church on the one hand, and the civil State on the other, involves in it errors equally detrimental to both. The Erastian theory is guilty of this error, when it makes the Church the creature and portion of the State,—thereby confounding two ordinances of God, essentially distinct and separate. But the very same error is committed in a somewhat different manner by the theory of the late Dr. Arnold, where he affirms that, "in a country where the nation or government are avowedly and essentially Christian, the State or nation is virtually the Church."[1]

[1] Arnold, *Fragment on the Church*, Lond. 1845, p. 177, 2d ed. In the circumstance alluded to, "The State becomes transformed into the Church; the spirit of the Church is transfused into a more perfect body, and its former external organization dies away. . . . What was a kingdom of the world, is become a kingdom of Christ,—a portion of the Church, in the high and spiritual sense of the term; but in that sense in which 'Church' denotes the outward and social organization of Christians in any one place, it is no longer a Christian Church, but, what is far higher and better, a Christian kingdom." "It is changed into a better and purer self, like Kaiyal, when she had tasted the Amreeta cup of immortality." See also pp. 221–228, and *Postscript to Principles of Church Reform*, 1833, pp. 18–28, 3d ed. [Theories regarding the ultimate identity of Church and State, of a nature closely kindred to the views now referred to, were widely spread on the Continent about the time when

According to such a system, the State and the Church are, under certain circumstances, identical, quite as much as on the theory of Erastians; although, according to Arnold, this identity is brought about by the State merging its own existence in and becoming part of the Church; while, according to the other system, it is accomplished in the opposite way, of the Church merging its own existence in and becoming part of the State. In neither system is that grand and fundamental distinction recognised which God has set before our eyes so prominently in the fact of the ordination by Himself of the two separate and independent societies,—the one for spiritual, and the other for civil purposes; and the forgetfulness of which inevitably leads to errors ruinous on the one side or the other. Deny or ignore that distinction, and there is no

Arnold wrote. Thus, for instance, Hegel defines "the State" as "the real embodiment of the ethical idea." "The State is the Divine will, as a present spirit, unfolding itself to the actual form and organization of a world." "Religion," again, "is the relation to the absolute in the form of sentiment, imagination, faith."—Hegel's *Werke*, Berlin 1833, 8ter Band, *Rechtsphilosophie*, §§ 257–270.

Both the Church and State, he goes on to remark, have to do with truth and morality; there is only a difference of form between them (p. 342). "Wenn die wesentliche Einheit derselben (State and Church) ist die der Wahrheit, der Grundsätze, und Gesinnung, so ist es ebenso wesentlich dass mit dieser Einheit der Unterschied, den sie in der Form ihres Bewusstseins haben, zur besonderen Existenz gekommen sei" (p. 345). Hegel, therefore, while recognising a certain distinction between Church and State as desirable or necessary to be kept up, at least in present circumstances (pp. 346, 349), did not draw the line of demarcation very deeply or decidedly; and Strauss, following out Hegel's principles on this, as on many other points, with great boldness and with characteristic clearness and precision of expression, discards the distinction altogether. According to him, with every step which the State makes towards perfection, the Church becomes more and more useless. It is a mere "crutch of the State," which may, and should, be thrown away. Strauss, *Christl. Glaubenslehre*, ii. 618 ff.

By Rothe, again, Hegel's views have been developed in a rather different shape, and in a very elaborate and able way. The religious element, he holds, is essential to morality; and morality only corresponds to its idea in so far as it is piety as well. In the normal state of things, therefore, the moral community, *i.e.* the State, is essentially and absolutely a *religious* community. Until, however, this full moral development be attained, the moral community must supplement itself by one specially religious, *i.e.* the Church, or community of piety purely as such. The latter must, and will, retire and dissolve, in proportion as the former rises and expands into its true ideal, the kingdom of God, or Theocracy. "Der vollendete Staat schliesst die Kirche schlechthin aus." Rothe, *Anfange der christl. Kirche*, Wittenberg 1837, §§ 5, 6 ff.; *Theologische Ethik*, i. 418 f.; ii. 145 f.; iii. 1009–1125. Comp. Nitzsch's criticism of this theory, *System der christl. Lehre*, § 198. Comp. also Coleridge's theory of a "National Church," or "Clerisy," "in relation to which Christianity or the Church of Christ is a blessed accident," etc.; *Constitution of the Church and State*, Lond. 1830, pp. 49 ff., 67, 145 ff., 2d ed.]

security remaining against either the State becoming the tyrant of the Church, or the Church the tyrant of the State,—against a civil supremacy over the conscience which would trample all spiritual freedom in the dust, or an ecclesiastical usurpation over our temporal rights that would lay all civil liberty in ruins. In the Divine institution of a spiritual society, distinct from and independent of the State, God has taught before our eyes the grand and vitally important lesson of the fundamental distinction between things civil and things spiritual; and has made provision that the Christian Church, His own appointment, shall never become either the tyrant or the slave of the kingdoms of men.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCH IN ITS TWOFOLD CHARACTER AS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.

In attempting, as has been already done, to ascertain the various meanings of the term Church in Scripture, I had occasion to speak of the distinction between the Church invisible and the Church visible. That distinction is so important in itself, and involves in it principles so fundamental in respect to our future discussions, that it may be desirable to inquire into the grounds and nature of it at somewhat greater length. To this subject the present chapter will more especially be devoted.

Now, at the outset, it is not unimportant to remark, that when we speak of the Church invisible and the Church visible, we are not to be understood as if we referred in these designations to two separate and distinct Churches, but rather to the same Church under two different characters. We do not assert that Christ has founded two Churches on earth, but only one; and we affirm that that *one* Church is to be regarded under two distinct aspects. As the Church invisible, it consists of the whole number of the elect, who are vitally united to Christ the Head, and of none other. As the Church visible, it consists of all those who profess the faith of Christ, together with their children. There are many things which can be affirmed of the Church of Christ under the one aspect, which cannot be affirmed of it under the other; and it is most important that the distinction be kept in view, in order to a right understanding of the declarations of Scripture in regard to the Church. There are two things, the statement of which may serve to exhibit and define the difference between the Church invisible and the Church visible.

1*st*. The Church invisible stands, with respect to its members, in an inward and spiritual relationship to Christ, whereas the Church visible stands to Him in an outward relationship only.

In so far as the Church invisible is concerned, the truth of this statement will be readily admitted by all. There can be no difference of opinion on the point. The proper party with whom the covenant of grace is made, and to whom its promises and privileges belong, is the invisible Church of real believers. It is this Church for which Christ died. It is this Church that is espoused to Him as the Bride. It is the members of this Church that are each and all savingly united to Him as their Head. The bond of communion between them and the Saviour is an invisible and spiritual one, securing to all of them the enjoyment of saving blessings here, and the promise of everlasting redemption hereafter. None but Romanists deny or ignore this.

The case is altogether different with the visible Church. It stands not in an inward and saving relationship to Christ, but in an outward relationship only, involving no more than the promise and enjoyment of outward privileges. In that mysteriously mingled condition of being in which believers are found here, with souls in fellowship on the one side with the Spirit of God, and on the other side with the body, an outward provision has been judged suitable even for their spiritual edification and improvement, with a view to prepare them on earth for their destination in glory. There is an outward government established for the order and regulation of the society of the elect; there are outward ordinances adapted and blessed for their improvement; there is an outward discipline designed and fitted for their purification and protection. All this necessarily implies an outward and visible society, embracing and encompassing the invisible and spiritual one; in other words, an outward Church, within which the invisible Church of real believers is embosomed, protected, perfected. Admit that some external framework of privileges and ordinances has been erected by Christ around His own elect people in this world, and you are led directly to the idea of a visible society, distinguished from the invisible by the outward form which it bears, and the outward relation in which it stands to Christ. The form of the invisible Church cannot be distinguished by the eye of man, for the features and lineaments of it are known only to God; whereas the form of the visible Church is marked out and defined by its external government, ordinances, and arrangements. The members of the invisible Church cannot be discerned or detected by the eye of man, for

their call is the inward call of the Spirit, and their relation to Christ a spiritual and unseen one; whereas the members of the visible Church stand revealed to the sight of all by the outward profession they make, and the external connection in which they stand to Christ, as they enjoy the privileges and ordinances of His appointment. The members of the Church invisible are joined in an inward relationship to Christ, in consequence of having listened to His inward call by the Spirit, and being vitally united to Him through faith. The members of the Church visible are joined in an outward connection with Christ, in consequence of having obeyed His outward call by the Word, and being now made partakers by Him in the external privileges and ordinances of a Church state.

This external relationship, in which the members of the visible Church stand to Christ, as having been brought into a Church state from out of the world, has been often spoken of by theologians under the name of an external covenant or federal relationship. Whatever name may be given to it, there is no doubt that there is a real and important relationship into which the members of the visible Church have entered, to be distinguished alike from the state of the world without, and from the state of the invisible Church within. It is to be distinguished from the condition of the world at large; for the members of the visible Church have received and obeyed, at least outwardly, the call of Christ, and have made a profession of their faith in Him, and in consequence have entered into the possession and enjoyment of certain privileges and ordinances that belong to a Church state. It is to be distinguished from the condition of the invisible Church of true believers; for although the members of the visible Church may have outwardly obeyed the call and entered into possession of the external privileges of the Church, yet the inward grace and vital union to the Saviour may be awanting, and theirs may be a relationship wholly of an outward kind. But although it be an outward relationship, and no more, it is nevertheless a real one, under whatsoever name it may be represented.

There are two things plainly implied in it. *First* of all, there is an external provision of ordinances made by Christ in His Church, ensuring both outward privilege and blessing, not of a saving kind, to those who use them aright; and with this there is the invitation addressed to all men to enter in and to partake

of them; and *secondly*, there is a compliance with this invitation on the part of those who profess their faith in Christ and join themselves to His Church, and the actual enjoyment and experience of the privileges so promised,—in so far, at least, as they are of an external or temporal kind. All this, the mere profession of faith in Christ, and the act of joining himself in external observance to the visible Church, will secure to the formal professor. He may not possess that faith unfeigned and that vital union to the Saviour which will obtain for him the internal and saving blessing which the real believer will find in the ordinances; but there are external privileges which he may and does obtain in consequence of his mere outward profession and observance; and although he falls short of the saving benefit which the spiritual Christian finds in Christ's Church, yet the benefits he actually enjoys are both real and important. This relation of the mere formal professor and member of the visible Church to Christ may be called an external covenant and outward federal union, or not. But under whatever name, it is important to bear in mind that there is such a relationship, involving both real responsibilities and real privileges; and that it is this relationship, as contradistinguished from an inward and saving one, that makes the difference between the members of the visible and the members of the invisible Church of Christ.

2*d*. The Church invisible is made up of true believers, and of none else; whereas the Church visible is composed of those who outwardly profess their faith in Christ, and may include not only true believers, but also hypocrites.

This follows, as a necessary consequence, from what has already been stated. If the members of the Church invisible stand in an inward and spiritual relationship to Christ, they must be, all of them, His true disciples, and in the number of the elect; and if, on the other hand, the members of the visible Church stand in an external relation, and no more, to the Saviour, they *may* at least include in their number those who are in reality strangers to Him. If indeed the edification and perfecting of the body of believers were to be secured in their journey through this world by the help and use of outward ordinances and an outward administration, then the admission of formal professors as well as true Christians to the enjoyment of those external privileges, would seem to be a matter unavoidable. If a visible Church, with its

outward means of grace, is to be established for the edifying of the body of Christ, it were impossible, without the help of some inspired and infallible judge, qualified to detect the formal and feigned profession, to shut out from such a Church the hypocrite and the formalist. An outward Church, administered by human and fallible instruments, must necessarily share its benefits of a mere external kind with the feigned believer, as well as with the true. Up to a certain point, the formalist and the spiritual man will partake in common of the outward privileges which it bestows on all within its pale. Those privileges were indeed provided and intended, in the first instance, for the spiritual advantage of the true believer. It is for his sake that a visible Church, with its outward administration of word and ordinance, is established and kept up in the world. But side by side with the real Christian will be found the formal Christian also,—both alike sharing in external ordinances, and brought under a certain external relationship to Christ; but one of them contented with the name, while the other only enjoys the reality of the saving privilege in addition. Such has been the condition of the Church in all ages, and such was it always intended to be. Under a former economy there were Church ordinances of an outward kind shared in by Israel after the flesh, no less than by Israel after the spirit,—by the natural as well as by the spiritual seed of Abraham. There was a Church visible standing in an external relation to God, and embracing in it many who belonged to God only after the flesh; and within the bosom of that external Church there was another, the invisible, standing in a spiritual relation to God, and embracing in it none but His spiritual people. That former dispensation has passed away, and another has succeeded to it, of wider range and more elevated character. Yet the principle of God's dealings with His people is still one and the same,—God still provides for the benefit of His own believing people an outward framework, so to speak, of ordinances and external administration, within which His invisible Church is hid. To the external privileges of that visible society even sinners are invited,—not that they may rest there, but that they may go on to the invisible and spiritual society within. And even formalists are permitted to mingle in outward fellowship with true believers, in order that, if possible, they may be brought to seek for something higher and more blessed. Like the field in which there sprang

up the mingled crop of tares and wheat, the visible Church will ever reveal a mixed communion of real and merely nominal believers. It is not until the end of the world, when the harvest comes, that the invisible Church of Christ will stand disclosed in contradistinction to the visible, as a communion of the elect only.

The difference, then, between the Church invisible and the Church visible, may be exhibited and defined under these two heads: 1*st*, The one stands in an inward and saving relationship to Christ, whereas the other stands in an external relationship only; and, 2*d*, the one is made up of the elect solely, while the other embraces in its communion nominal as well as real believers.[1] The principles now illustrated, in regard to the real distinction and yet the real connection between the Church invisible and the Church visible, bear with them very important consequences. It may be well to indicate, without illustrating in detail, their bearings in four different directions.

In the first place, the doctrine in regard to the visible and invisible Church which we have laid down, if it be a correct and scriptural one, has a most important and decisive bearing upon the principles of Independents in reference to Church communion. I do not intend at present to enter at length upon this question, as it may be necessary to advert to it more largely when treating of the members of the Church. But it may be well at present to indicate the conclusions to which the principles already laid down, in regard to the Church in its twofold character of visible and invisible, seem to lead on the subject of its membership. Independents in general have rejected this distinction, and

[1] [Calvin, *Inst.:* Verum quia nunc de visibili Ecclesia disserere propositum est, discamus vel "Matris" elogio quam utilis sit nobis ejus cognitio, imo necessaria, etc. . . . Interdum quum Ecclesiam nominant (sacræ literæ), eam intelligunt quæ re vera est coram Deo, in quam nulli recipiuntur nisi qui et adoptionis gratia Filii Dei sunt, et Spiritus sanctificatione vera Christi membra. Ac tunc quidem comprehendit electos omnes. . . . Sæpe autem Ecclesiæ nomine universalem hominum multitudinem in orbe diffusam designat, quæ unum se Deum et Christum colere profitetur. Baptismo initiatur in ejus fidem. Coenæ participatione unitatem in vera doctrina et charitate testatur. Consensionem habet in verbo Domini, atque ad ejus prædicationem ministerium conservat a Christo institutum. In hac autem plurimi sunt permixti hypocritæ, etc.—Lib. iv. cap. i. §§ 4, 7–9. Turrettin, *Op.* tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. 7. For the views of the Lutheran Church as to the Church visible and invisible, see Gerhard's very elaborate discussion and defence of the distinction, *Loci Theologici*, ed. Preuss, Berlin 1867, tom. v. loc. xxii. cap. vii.; Martensen, *Dogmatik*, § 191; Nitzsch, *Prot. Beant.* pp. 222, 234, 241; Hase, *Dogmatik*, Loc. xxi. § 124.]

denied that there is ground in Scripture for asserting the existence of an outward society of professing Christians standing in an outward relation to Christ, and made up of nominal as well as actual believers. In his work on *Congregational Independency* Dr. Wardlaw has ranked, under the title of "Unauthorized Uses of the word Church," the employment of it in the sense of the invisible and visible Church; and he restricts the meanings of the word to these two,—either "the whole body of the faithful, the entire spiritual Israel of God," or "a society of believers in any place."[1] In Dr. Samuel Davidson's work on the *Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament* we have the very same statement, and almost in the same words.[2] Hence, in rejecting the doctrine of a visible Church, and denying any use of the term Church, except in the sense of the whole body of believers or a society of believers in one place, Independents are forced to take up the position that none but true believers can be members of the Church. And in order to carry out this principle, they are constrained to demand, as the only ground of admission to Church fellowship, positive and distinct evidence of grace and regeneration on the part of the candidate. This principle of "pure communion," as it is called, besides the inextricable difficulties of a practical kind, in which it is involved, seems to be directly opposed to the views already deduced from Scripture as to the nature of the Church itself. It is to the Church as a visible society that the ordinance of discipline has been entrusted; and it is in conformity with its character as the Church visible, that the administration of discipline in the admission or rejection of members must be conducted. If the Church visible stands in an external relationship to Christ, and is made up not merely of real but of professing believers, then there can be required for admission into that society no qualification beyond an outward profession of faith in Christ, such as in itself, and in the circumstances connected with it, may be fairly regarded as a credible one. To demand more than this, is to demand more than Scripture warrants or requires. It is to confound two things which are essentially distinct from each other,—the qualification and character necessary to constitute a man a member of the invisible, with the qualification and charac-

[1] Wardlaw, *Congregational Independency*, Glasgow 1848. pp. 44, 63.
[2] Davidson, *Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament*, Lond. 1848, pp. 58-60, 126-131.

ter necessary to constitute him a member of the visible, Church. If the principles in regard to the Church already enunciated be correct, the evidence on which a candidate for admission may be rightly received into the communion of the Church is not a positive proof of regeneration—which no man can give to or receive from another,—but the evidence of a credible profession of faith in Christ, and a corresponding conduct.[1]

In the second place, the principles in regard to the visible and invisible Church already indicated have a very important bearing on the question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of Infant Baptism. It will be sufficient to point out this, without entering into the general question, which will more naturally fall to be considered at a subsequent stage in our discussions. But I may remark, that the doctrine of the visible Church and its external covenant relationship to Christ, lays the foundation for those views of Church membership which justify us in regarding the infants of professing Christians as entitled to share the communion and privileges of the Church. According to that doctrine, a saving faith on the part of a man is the ground on which he is admitted a member of the invisible Church of Christ, not the condition demanded for his reception of Church privileges within the visible Church. It is on the ground, not of a faith, which an unconscious infant cannot have, but of that external relationship to Christ, which the child may share with the believing parent, that we are warranted in holding that the infants of such as belong to the visible Church are themselves members also, and therefore entitled to the enjoyment of its privileges and its ordinances along with the parent. The Independent view, which insists on the possession of a saving faith in Christ as the only footing on which Church membership can be conceded, and the only title to the enjoyment of Church ordinances, tends very directly, if consistently carried out, to deprive the infants of professing Christians of their right to be regarded as members of the Church, or to claim the benefit of its ordinances. The tendency of these views to lead to such a conclusion—notwithstanding of many exceptions to

[1] Apollonius, *Consideratio*, cap. i. pp. 1-15. Wood (Prof. James, St. Andrews), *Little Stone*, etc., Edin. 1654, pp. 127-168. Ayton of Alyth's *Original Constitution of the Christian Church*, Edin. 1730, pp. 108-167. Whytock, *Vindication of Presbytery; with Twelve Essays on the Church*. Edin. 1843, pp. 97-115.

the contrary—seems to be evinced in the fact of the large number of the Independent body who actually hold opinions hostile to Infant Baptism; and it seems to be further evinced by the progress, among the same religious denomination, of views like those of Dr. Halley, in his work on the Sacraments, in which he advocates the opinion that they are no more than signs; and justifies the practice of administering Baptism to infants on that very ground.[1] There cannot, I think, be any doubt that right and intelligent views regarding the scriptural distinction between the Church visible and invisible goes far to prepare the way for a sound decision on the question of Infant Baptism.

In the third place, the principles already laid down in regard to the Church invisible and the Church visible have a very wide and important bearing on the differences found between the Church system of Romanists and the Church system of Protestants. The existence of an invisible Church, and the relation it bears to the visible Church, lie at the very foundation of the controversy between them. The strong desire and tendency with Popish controversialists is to deny the existence of the invisible Church; or, when they are not bold enough to do that, at least to give the decided precedence to the Church visible. I had already occasion to remark that Bossuet, in his celebrated work on the *Variations of Protestantism*, charges upon the Reformers the invention of the theory of an invisible Church to meet the so often repeated objection, couched sometimes in the form of the question, "Where was your Church before Luther?"[2] The late Dr. Milner, in his work entitled *End of Controversy*, repeats the charge previously made by Bossuet.[3] But even when less extreme views are entertained,

[1] Halley, *The Sacraments*, Lond. 1844, pp. 7, 66-110, 489 ff.

[2] Bossuet, *Var.* Dublin 1856, vol. ii. pp. 282-289 ff., 2d ed. See also Bellarmine, tom. ii. lib. iii. cap. xi., where he asserts, on the authority of F. Staphylus, that "the Lutherans at first made the Church invisible. Then, when they saw what absurdities would follow from that position, they came to a secret resolution that the Church should be called visible. Accordingly, they all began to teach that the Church was visible, but in such a way, that while in name visible, in reality it was invisible" (Staphylus, *Apologia*, Coloniæ 1561, Pars iii. p. 147). [Compare Calvin's brief and pointed answers to the charges commonly brought by Romanists against the Reformed Churches, in the preface to the *Institutes* addressed to the king of France, where, *inter alia*, he takes up this question of the visibility of the Church: "Non parum a vero ipsi aberrant, dum Ecclesiam non agnoscunt nisi quam præsenti oculo cernant," etc.—*Inst.* lib. iv. cap. i. §§ 7-9.]

[3] Milner, *End of Religious Controversy*, Lond. 1841, p. 192. Compare also Perrone, *Prælect. Theolog.* tom. i. pp. 184, 185; ii. pp. 708-713.

and the reality of a Church invisible is not denied, yet the doctrinal system of Roman Catholics requires that it should be made entirely subordinate to the visible.[1] In the very able and interesting work by Möhler, late Professor of Theology at Munich, entitled *Symbolism, or Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences between Catholics and Protestants*, we have the following statement in regard to this point: "The Catholics teach: the visible Church is first,—then comes the invisible: the former gives birth to the latter. On the other hand, the Lutherans say the reverse: from the invisible emerges the visible Church; and the former is the groundwork of the latter. In this apparently very unimportant opposition, a prodigious difference is avowed."[2] This statement by Möhler, taken with some little qualification, may be regarded as not unfairly setting forth the general doctrinal difference between Romanists and Protestants on the subject of the Church.

The doctrine of the Church of Rome starts with the idea of an outward Church, to which an invisible and spiritual one is completely subordinate, and before which it must give place. The spiritual character of the gospel in all its relations to man is superseded by the relations to him of an outward Church; and on this foundation many of the worst and most characteristic errors of Popery are reared.[3] Instead of the inward working of the Word upon the soul, Popery substitutes the outward authority of an infallible Church; instead of an inward faith uniting a man to his Saviour, Popery substitutes an outward union with a visible society; instead of the internal operation of the Spirit upon the heart, renewing and sanctifying the inner man, Popery substitutes the outward cleansing by penance and absolution, appointed by the Church; instead of the unseen Priest in heaven, with His unseen intercession and His one ever-sufficient sacrifice,

[1] Wiseman, *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, Lond. 1847, vol. i. pp. 332-334.

[2] Möhler, *Symbolism*, Robertson's Translation, Lond. 1847, vol. ii. p. 108, 2d ed. [Die Katholiken lehren: die sichtbare Kirche ist zuerst, dann kommt die unsichtbare: jene bildet erst diese. Die Lutheraner sagen dagegen umgekehrt: aus der unsichtbaren geht die sichtbare hervor, und jene ist der Grund von dieser. In diesem scheinbar höchst unbedeutenden Gegensatze ist eine ungeheure Differenz ausgesprochen. Möhler, *Symbolik*, 6te Auflage.]

[3] [According to the well-known antithesis of Schleiermacher, "Protestantism makes the relation of the individual to the Church dependent upon his relation to Christ: (Roman) Catholicism makes the relation of the individual to Christ dependent upon his relation to the Church." *Christl. Glaube*, Band i. § 145. Twesten, *Vorlesungen über Dogmatik*, 4te Ausg. Band i. pp. 105-108.]

there is the visible priest and the material sacrifice to be found in the outward Church on earth. To repeat the words of Möhler: "The Catholics teach: the visible Church is first,—then comes the invisible;" or, rather, "the visible Church is first, and the invisible comes not at all." If the principles already laid down are correct, the reverse, very nearly, of all this is true. The primary and leading idea of the Church is unquestionably the Church invisible, comprising the whole body of the elect, for whose sake a visible Church has been established on this earth at all. In the spiritual union of believers to Christ, and in the privileges resulting from that union, we recognise the foundation of all the privileges that belong to the visible society. The Church, in its character as invisible, and spiritually united to Christ through all its members, is a fact not to be set aside or superseded by the outward communion of a visible Church. Right views as to the existence of, and relations between, the two will go far to prepare the way for an intelligent understanding and discernment of Popish errors.[1]

In the fourth place, the principles already laid down in regard to the Church, as invisible and visible, are necessary to enable us to interpret the different statements of Scripture in connection with the Church. On the one hand, there are averments made in Scripture in regard to the invisible Church which are true of it, but not of the visible Church; and, on the other hand, there are assertions made in regard to the visible Church which are true of it, but not of the Church invisible. And there is not a more frequent source of perplexity and error in Theology than the confounding or identifying the character and properties belonging to the one with the character and properties belonging to the other. To apply thus interchangeably, and as if properly convertible, what is spoken in Scripture of the invisible Church to the visible, and *vice versa*, is a frequent and favourite resource of Romanist controversialists, when called upon to illustrate their theory of Church principles, or to defend their pretensions to

[1] See Litton, *The Church of Christ*, Lond. 1851, pp. 11, 69-80; *Brit. and For. Ev. Review*, vol. vi. No. xix., Art. on Perpetuity of the Church (by Dr. Hodge, of Princeton), pp. 75, 77 ff.; Isaac Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, Lond. 1840, vol. i. p. 492, 2d ed.; Principal Cunningham's *Works*, Edin. 1863, vol. ii. pp. 9-18; Apollonii, *Consideratio Quarundam Controversiarum*, etc., Londini 1644, cap. i. pp. 1-9; Eng. Transl., *A Consideration of Certaine Controversies*, Lond. 1645, pp. 2-8 ff.

Church power. There are statements, for example, in Scripture, in regard to the oneness of the body of Christ, which attribute to the whole collective number of the elect a unity of faith and hope and character of the most perfect kind,—statements which apply mainly or only to the invisible Church, but which, once transferred by Romanists to the visible Church, have been developed into that system of outward and formal unity characteristic of the Papacy, and beyond which there is no possibility of salvation. In like manner, there are intimations not a few in the New Testament, giving promise of the continued presence of the Spirit with the body of believers, and affording an assurance that they shall be led into and kept in the truth,—a security, indeed, without which they would soon cease to be believers at all. And these intimations, applicable as they are to the invisible Church, have been misapplied by Romanists to the visible, and have been interpreted into a promise of infallibility to be bestowed on the Church at Rome. It is thus that the language of our Lord or His inspired disciples, in regard to that Church which He purchased with His own blood, and which is one with Him, has been outraged and misapplied from age to age in justification of the claims and pretensions of the Romish Church. Such a system of interpretation or misinterpretation of Scripture language in regard to the Church, has led to some of the worst errors in Theology; and nothing but a clear discernment of the principles that connect and yet distinguish the Church invisible and the Church visible, and a right application of these to explain the statements of the Word of God on the point, will save us from mistakes fraught with the most ruinous consequences both in doctrine and practice.[1]

[1] Compare the history of the Novatian and Donatist controversies, regarding which Neander justly remarks, that "the fundamental error" of Cyprian as well as Novatian, of the party of Augustine as well as of the Donatists, lay "in confounding the notions of the invisible and of the visible Church." "It was this that prevented both parties from coming to a mutual understanding." Neander, *Hist. of the Christ. Church*, Torrey's Transl., vol. i. 332, 336–338; vol. iii. 276-278. Whytock, *Vind. of Presbytery*, etc., pp. 97 ff. 116 ff. Litton, *Church of Christ*, pp. 306–338. [Mastricht, *Theologia Theoretico-Practica*, tom. ii. lib. vii. cap. i. §§ 4, 6, 28; Hooker, *Eccles. Polity*, B. iii. chaps. 1.–xiii; Field, *The Church*, B. i. chap. x. See also Rothe's discussion of the views of the Fathers on this point, especially Origen's distinction between the Church, improperly so called, and the κυριως ἐκκλησια, and Augustine's between the *corpus Christi verum* and the *corpus Christi simulatum*. Rothe's own views on this subject are closely akin to those of Möhler. Rothe, *Anfänge*, 609, 623, 289 f.]

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCH IN ITS TWOFOLD CHARACTER AS CATHOLIC AND LOCAL.

IF all professing Christians throughout the world could meet together in one place, and join in the observance of ordinances in one assembly, they would form a visible society in the strictest sense of the term *one*,—being united among themselves, and separated from the rest of mankind by the profession of a common faith, and by fellowship in the same outward solemnities. Such a state of things, however, has not been realized on earth since the day when the hundred and twenty disciples met together in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, or rather since the day when around one table, and in the fellowship of one loaf and one cup, the disciples of Christ sat down together with their Master to eat the first Lord's Supper before He was offered. It was not the intention of our Lord that this local and visible unity of His followers should continue, because its continuance would have been inconsistent with the progress of His Gospel in the world. In a very brief period the word of that Gospel went forth from Jerusalem to the most distant regions of the earth, being planted in cities and countries the most remote from each other, and gathering together into separate Christian societies, where it was received, men who had never seen, and were never destined to see, each other in the flesh. The unity of one Christian society, met together under one roof at Jerusalem, was soon exchanged for the diversity of many distinct societies of Christians meeting together for worship in separate places, and scattered, more or less, over the whole civilised world. The preaching of the glad tidings of salvation that began at Jerusalem, was not destined to be confined within its walls: the Gospel was to be proclaimed to every creature under heaven. Distance of place, difference of country

and race and language, soon necessarily intervened to break up the visible unity of the disciples of Christ.

Now, taking the actual historical fact of the separation thus effected among the followers of Christ, so soon as Christianity was diffused through the world, the question meets us: What is the relation in which these separate societies stand to each other and to the whole number of believers on earth? Is there anything in the principles which they profess in common, or in the objects at which they aim, sufficient to overcome the distance of place and distinction of language, and to give to all these worshipping societies a real unity, notwithstanding of a local and outward separation? The answer to this question opens up the consideration of the twofold aspect under which the Christian Church may be regarded as local and catholic,—local, as limited to one spot, and separated by distance of place and by other obstacles from visible ordinary communion with other societies; and yet catholic, as possessing a high unity in the faith or profession of one Lord and Saviour.

The property of catholic, as contradistinguished from local, which belongs to the Christian Church, is to be explained in two senses, as it refers more especially to the invisible or to the visible Church of Christ. In both cases the Christian society is to be regarded as catholic, although under somewhat different aspects.

I. In the first place, the invisible Church of Christ, made up of the whole number of true believers throughout the world, is *catholic*, or, in other words, not confined to any place or people. In this respect, it stands contrasted with the limited and local economy of the Church under the Jewish dispensation. In so far as the Jewish Church constituted a society of the worshippers of God, it was local, not catholic. It had its centre at Jerusalem, and its circumference at the geographical limits of Judea. With one local temple for the worshippers, and one altar for their gifts, with the command to repair thrice a year to Jerusalem to observe the solemn feasts, with a national priesthood and a national membership,—the Church, under the former dispensation, was designed and fitted to be no more than a limited and partial one. There is a striking contrast between all this and the Christian Church under the Gospel. There is now no local centre for the religious service of Christ's people,—no holy place to which they must repair personally for their worship, or towards which, when

at a distance, they must turn their face in prayer. Neither at Jerusalem, nor in the temple, are men now to worship the Father. Wherever on the wide earth there is a true worshipper, *there* is a true temple of Jehovah, and *there* He may be worshipped in spirit and in truth. There is no more a national priesthood limited to one blood, and found only among the sons of Aaron. There is one Priest for all, who has taken upon Him the flesh, not of the Jew only, but of man; and whose blood is kindred to that which flows in the veins of the whole human race,—a Priest sufficient for all, and common to all. There is now no national membership in the Church of Christ, limited to one hereditary family or favoured race; but in the fellowship of one faith and one spirit, all, of whatever tribe or tongue or nation, are one with Christ, and one with each other. The narrow barriers of a former economy have been thrown down; and in the gift of the Spirit to all believers, and in the fellowship of the Spirit co-extensive with all, there is laid the foundation of a Church, no longer confined to one nation as before under the law, but world-wide and universal. In the *universality* of the one Spirit, as embracing all, and co-extensive with all who are the real disciples of Christ throughout the world, we see the provision made for a Church limited to no country, and peculiar to no people. In the *unity* of the Spirit, as undivided, notwithstanding of division of place and kindred and language, we see the provision made for binding into *one* all of whatever name or class to whom that Spirit has been given. Earthly and outward causes of separation are overborne and controlled by this higher principle of unity. Separation in race or tongue is no separation to be accounted of among the followers of Christ, who are joined together in that one Spirit. Distance on the earth is no distance to be regarded between those who are partakers together of the same Holy Ghost. Local Churches or societies, divided in place and outward worship, become merged in the oneness of a higher fellowship. Separated in the outward act of worship, they are joined in the communion of the same Spirit. The assemblies of Christians in every quarter of the globe, who worship God in sincerity and truth, are one in such a sense as their distance from one another admits of; and they must all be regarded as branches of the universal Church of Christ throughout the world,—the great community of believers, separated by distance and kindred and

tongue, who cannot meet together in the body, but who really meet together in the Spirit. The invisible Church of Christ on earth is local, but it is also catholic.

II. In the second place, the visible Church of Christ, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, is also catholic or universal. The catholicity of the visible Church rests upon somewhat different grounds from those on which the catholicity of the invisible Church is founded; but it is not less real, nor less clearly recognised in Scripture. In the one case we speak of the invisible Church as catholic, because the bond of union among its members is the fellowship of one Spirit, embracing all, and co-extensive with all; in the other case we speak of the visible Church as catholic, because the bond of union among its members is a common public profession, and an outward federal relationship to Christ. The catholic visible Church is not a mere abstract idea,—a convenient expression for the number of all those Christians who visibly profess the faith of Christ throughout the world. It is much more than this: it is made up of all Christians who, visibly professing the faith of Christ, are constituted by that profession into one corporate body, and stand in one outward covenant relationship to Christ. This, in so far as regards the visible Church, is the primary and usual application of the term in Scripture. The application of it to local Churches or separate congregations is only a subordinate and secondary meaning. This catholic visible Church is recognised in Scripture as a real society, having certain corporate privileges, and standing in a certain outward covenant to Christ. Its privileges are, an outward provision of government, ordinances, and worship, appointed by Christ for the benefit of all who will partake of them, and rightly use them. The bond of connection among its members is a common profession of the faith, and a common submission by them to a Church state and a Church fellowship. In the unity, and yet the universality, of this outward profession and outward relationship to Christ, we recognise the foundation laid for the catholicity of the visible Church on earth. There is a unity in the outward profession of all its members, which, notwithstanding of minor and accidental diversities as to place and condition and administration, remains undivided, and knits them together into one body,—one among themselves, and separate from the rest of mankind. There is a universality in

this outward profession and relationship to Christ in a Church state, that embraces all the professing disciples of Jesus throughout the world, and is limited to no class, and peculiar to no people. The separation, then, of the congregations of this visible Church from each other by distance of place, by difference of language, by varieties of administration, by different modes of worship and different outward observations, is a separation accidental and not essential, and cannot affect the fact of that higher unity that belongs to them as knit together in one profession of faith in Christ, and included together in the bond of an external covenant. The local and accidental differences are merged in the higher and essential oneness that belongs to them, as equally the members of a society which Christ has sealed with the seal of outward privileges, and recognised as His kingdom in the world. Those differences that do obtain in this world among professing Christians and separate Churches, both as respects opinion and practice, may indeed be very numerous and very great; and the importance of them is not to be undervalued or denied. But so long as these differences are not such as to sever them from the outward communion of Christ, and to set them aside as no longer His Churches, there is something still higher and more important than these diversities, however great they be. They are not to be accounted of in comparison with the common privilege of the covenant relationship in which all His Churches stand to Him; and all lower and accidental differences become lost in the unity of an outward fellowship with Him. Among the many Churches existing in New Testament times, separated from each other by distance of place, and difference of language, and variety of opinion and administration, we hear but of *one* kingdom of God, and no more than one. The visible Church was one and universal, embracing all and uniting all; and the many local Churches, severed far and wide from each other, were merged and combined in the one catholic Church of the Saviour.

Whether, then, we speak of the invisible or of the visible Church of Christ on earth, they are, as societies, catholic or universal, and not merely local and limited to one spot or people. The primary and fundamental idea of the invisible Church is that of a society co-extensive with all true believers throughout the world, and, as a society, standing in a spiritual relationship to Christ. The secondary and subordinate idea of the invisible Church is that of

a society limited to one place, and forming the local body of true Christians in that place. In the same manner, the primary idea of the visible Church is that of a society co-extensive with all professing Christians throughout the world, and standing in an outward federal relationship to Christ. And the secondary idea is that of the visible Church defined by the boundaries of some special locality, and forming the separate local Church in that place. In these we recognise not two Churches of Christ, but one Church under different aspects. We have, in short, in both cases, the Christian society in its twofold character of catholic and local.

Now there are various conclusions of an important nature that stand connected with the principles now illustrated. To some of these I would briefly advert.

I. In the first place, the principles laid down as to the Church local and catholic, serve to evince the nature of the relation in which both members and office-bearers of separate Churches stand to each other, notwithstanding of the separation. Remoteness of place, which the dissemination of the gospel throughout the world rendered unavoidable, has conspired with other causes to produce an apparent breach in the unity of the catholic Church. More than this, and worse than this: different interpretations of Scripture have introduced among professing Christians a difference of belief regarding the doctrines of Christianity. Opposite opinions, too, as to the forms of administration and modes of worship appointed for the Christian Church, have led to apparently irreconcilable breaches among them. And now the vast society of professing Christians throughout the world is broken up and divided into distinct sections, which not distance of place, but distance of opinion and practice, keeps apart; so that, while they profess to worship one God through one Mediator, they would not meet together for that worship in common, even although they could. Now it is of importance to mark how much of this separation among the body of professing Christians is due to the weakness or wickedness of man, and how little of it is due to the essential character and nature of a Church of Christ. It is not to be forgotten that the visible Church of Christ, although broken down, from the very nature of the case, into local and separate societies, is nevertheless catholic, and that the members of the Church are, in their character as members, not nominally but really one. The character that Christians sustain as members of

the Church, is a character that bears reference primarily and principally to the catholic, and not to any particular and local Church. That they are members of this or that local society of professing Christians, is an accidental circumstance, due to the place or the social community in which Providence may have ordered their habitation; but in becoming members of that local Church, they become members of the Church catholic and universal. Their admission by baptism into the particular society or congregation of any one place made them free of the Church at large; and their rightful exclusion from that society by excommunication, cuts them off from the privileges of the universal Church. The believer is not so much a member of any local Church whatsoever, as he is a member of the catholic Church of Christ, which is not confined to any place or people. In like manner, the office-bearers of the Christian Church are not the office-bearers of any particular society alone, but the office-bearers of the whole visible community of believers. It may be necessary, for the advantageous exercise of their office, and profitable for the Church, that particular ministers should be set apart to labour in particular charges, as more exclusively theirs. But their ministry is not limited to these. Their commission as preachers of the Gospel is a commission co-extensive with the visible Church of Christ; and they are free to exercise their ministry wherever and whenever they have a regular opportunity to do so. Both members and office-bearers stand related, in the first instance, to the Church catholic or universal, and only, in the second instance, to the Church local or particular. In the relation which all professing Christians, whether office-bearers or members, thus sustain in common to the catholic Church, notwithstanding of separation by place or other circumstances, we see the foundation laid for local Churches holding fellowship with each other. Difference of doctrine or administration or worship may indeed hinder their fellowship,—and not without sin on one side or other; but it ought never to be forgotten, that both members and office-bearers, however separated, if they belong to the Christian society at all, belong not to many Churches, properly speaking, but to one; that they are in communion, not so much with various local societies, as with the one catholic Church of the Redeemer.[1]

[1] It is on these grounds that "occasional communion"—or fellowship in ordinances and ministerial duty—between Churches held apart, for the present,

II. In the second place, the principles laid down demonstrate the evil of schism, or of causeless separation in the Church. The visible Church of Christ was intended by Him to be catholic and one; and notwithstanding of the dissemination far and wide throughout the world of the separate societies of professing Christians, it would be one in reality, as comprehending all and uniting all, were it not for the sinful infirmities of its members. That can be no light offence which gives to the one kingdom of God in this world the appearance of a kingdom divided against itself, and liable to fall. It were impossible, indeed, to deny that there may be real and sufficient ground for separation from some particular local Church. That a particular Church may itself apostatize from the faith, or be guilty of imposing upon its members terms of communion, to comply with which would be sin, there cannot be a doubt; and in such a case separation becomes a duty to be discharged, and not an offence to be avoided. But in separating in such circumstances from the Church, the schism lies not with the parties who separate, but with the Church that compels and causes the separation. In thus going forth from it, we maintain, in fact, rather than infringe on the higher unity of the one Church of Christ. But for parties to separate wantonly, and on insufficient grounds, from the communion of the visible Church, is a grave and serious offence against the authority of Christ in His house. To go out from the communion of the visible Church, and to widen its breaches wilfully, and for trivial reasons, is to set ourselves against the desire and design of Christ that His kingdom in this world should be catholic and one. And when schism is aggravated by the permanent abandonment of a Church profession and Church state,—when causeless separation from any one Church of Christ is followed by the disavowal of all,—when the outward profession that makes a man a member of the visible Church is cast off, and all Christian fellowship is disowned, the guilt incurred is of a ruinous kind. "The visible

from a more close and permanent union by differences in government, doctrine, etc., is to be defended. Compare Conf. chap. xxvi.: "Of the Communion of Saints." [For a further discussion and application of these principles, see the author's pamphlet on "*The Union Question, being the substance of a Speech delivered in the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, Jan.* 9, 1867," Edin. 1867, pp. 10–17, 27, 28. See Appendix A. "The Truth of the Unity of the Catholick Visible Church is the main ground of all Church Union and Communion:" Durham, *On Scandal*, Part iv. chap. i. p. 248; Hudson, *Vindication of the Essence and Unity of the Church Catholike Visible*, chap. vi. §§ 2–7, viii. 1–8, etc.]

Church," says the Confession of Faith, "is the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."[1]

III. In the third place, the principles already enunciated are fitted to throw considerable light on the principles of unity exhibited in the Christian Church. We have had occasion to remark that the Church invisible and the Church visible are both catholic or universal, but that they are so in somewhat different senses; the catholicity of the Church invisible being of a higher and more perfect kind than that of the Church visible. The same thing is true in regard to the unity of the Church. The Christian Church is one, whether you speak of it in its character as invisible, or in its character as visible. But a much higher unity, as well as a more complete, belongs to it in the one character than in the other. As the invisible Church of Christ, the unity characteristic of it is a spiritual unity, susceptible of a much higher character, as well as of a more complete realization, than in the case of the visible Church. The members of the invisible Church, or true believers, are, one and all of them, united to Christ, and united to each other in the communion of the Holy Ghost. They are one with their Head in heaven, and with His members on earth, in consequence of the common participation in the same Spirit; and the unity thus resulting to the invisible Church is one far higher, as well as more intimate and complete, than any relationship of an external kind can possibly be. The one and undivided Spirit of God is the bond and measure of the unity of the invisible Church. It is very different in regard to that unity which alone can be attributed to the visible Church of God in this world. The members of the visible Church are united together in an outward fellowship of privilege and ordinance in a Church state by means of an external profession; and their union with Christ, as members of the visible Church, is, like their union with each other, of an external kind. This unity of the visible Church can be neither so exalted in its character, nor so complete in its degree, as the unity of the invisible. It is lower in its character; for it is an outward and not a spiritual union. And it is less complete in degree; for

[1] Conf. chap. xxv. 2. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. i. §§ 2–4, 12 ff.; Durham, *On Scandal*, Part iv.; M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, pp. 76–88; Owen, *On Schism*, *Works*, vol. xiii. Goold's ed. pp. 112–114.]

it is a formal union, admitting under it of manifold inward diversities. The outward profession of the faith and outward relation to Christ implied in the union of the members of the visible Church, may consist with many differences and divisions as to other matters by which that union is made less complete and intimate. The history of the Christian Church, indeed, is a melancholy evidence of how great and manifold may be the differences as to doctrine and practice, which may consist with an outward union among men, standing all of them in an outward relation to Christ, as members of His Church. Beneath the formal and external union of the visible Church the marks of deep and sore division may be seen. In this respect, then, the unity of the invisible Church is a unity much higher in kind, and more intimate in degree, than the unity of the visible Church; and it is one of the greatest difficulties in the application and interpretation of Scripture language in reference to the Church, to discriminate the occasions on which it refers to the higher unity of the invisible from those on which the lower and less perfect unity of the visible Church is spoken of. The Church of Rome has not failed to profit by this difficulty, and has been accustomed to confound, as if they were interchangeable, the statements of Scripture in regard to the unity of the invisible, with the statements of Scripture in regard to the unity of the visible, Church. And hence the outward and formal unity of the Popish Church has been set forth by its adherents, as realizing all that is said in the New Testament of the oneness of the Church of Christ.[1] But it is never to be forgotten that the spiritual union of believers in the invisible Church of Christ is one of a much higher and more intimate kind than any to be realized visibly in the form or features of any outward society. The oneness of the invisible is the *ideal*, to which, amid all its breaches and divisions, the visible Church can only approximately approach. The distance between the oneness of the invisible and of the visible Church is, in the present state of the world, wide and great. The glory of a millennial age may perhaps make the actual in the latter approach indefinitely near to the ideal in the former; but until the day

[1] [Bellarmine, *Op.* tom. i. Pars ii. lib. i. cap. ix; ii. lib. iv. cap. x. Möhler, *Einheit in der Kirche*, 2te Aufl., pp. 175–252. Perrone, *Prælect. Theolog.* tom. i. p. 181 ff.]

of the consummation of all things they can never completely coincide.[1]

IV. In the fourth place, the principles laid down in regard to the Church catholic and local are fitted to explain the promise of perpetuity given to the Christian Church. There are statements in Scripture that seem distinctly to intimate that the Christian Church shall always continue to exist in this world, notwithstanding that all is earthly and hostile around her. God will never leave Himself without that witness which the Church bears to His name and cause on this earth. He has founded it upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But while there is such a promise given to the Church at large, there is no such assurance vouchsafed to particular Churches. The promise of perpetuity, and the fulfilment of that promise in the continued presence of Christ through His Spirit with the Church, belong to it in its character as catholic and not as local. That Christ will be with His Church "alway, even to the end of the world,"[2] ministering the needful support and grace for its permanent existence on earth, we cannot doubt. But in regard to no particular Church on earth have we warrant to cherish the same assurance. There are threatenings in Scripture not a few, of judgment and desertion, directed against particular Churches, to the extent of utter extermination because of their unfaithfulness and apostasy; and history tells us how, in the case of the seven Churches of Asia, such threatenings have been fulfilled. The Epistle to the Ephesians still stands in the canon of Scripture, and is read throughout the world; but the Church of Ephesus is desolate, and there are none within its walls to read it now. Local Churches may perish under the burden of their own unfaithfulness and sins; but the universal Church cannot perish, because upheld by the promise and protection of its Head. The catholic Church may indeed be more or less visible in the world. There may be multitudes added to it daily of such as shall be saved; or it may be reduced to the hidden seven thousand in Israel that have not bowed the knee to Baal. But with that

[1] [Turrettin, *Opera*, tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. 5, 6, *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*; Jurieu, *L'Unité de l'Eglise*, Partie 3me–5me; Litton, *Church of Christ*, pp. 383–394.]

[2] Ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμων εἰμι πασας τας ἡμερας ἑως της συντελειας του αἰωνος: "all the days until the consummation, the final winding up, of the present dispensation." Matt. xxviii. 20.

catholic Church the promise abides; and it is sufficient for its preservation on the earth. It is but one of the many perversions of Scripture of which Popery has been guilty, to transfer the promise of perpetuity given to the catholic and universal Church of Christ on earth, to the Church of Rome.[1]

V. In the fifth place, the principles already laid down serve, in like manner, to explain the statements made in Scripture, which give the assurance that the Church of Christ shall never fall away from the truth. That there are such assurances, there can be no reason to doubt. To believers generally was given the promise of the Spirit, not only to lead them into, but to keep them in all the truth; and that promise will continue to be fulfilled until the Church on earth has no longer the need of it, and when its members shall be placed beyond the reach of temptation to fall away from the truth. But this promise, like that of perpetuity, is made to no special society of professing believers. It is made to the catholic, not to any local Church of Christ; and it gives to particular Churches no security whatsoever that they may not depart from the truth and fall into error. The history of the Church on earth but too plainly and unequivocally records how the purest have become corrupt, and in what manner they have first ceased to contend as before for the faith, and then greedily embraced the opposite error. The Church of Christ, as catholic and universal, is indefectible, or, in other words, will be kept from falling away entirely from the truth, but not so the particular Churches of which it is composed; nor is it anything else but one of the lying cheats practised by the Church of Antichrist, first to transmute the promise of indefectibility into that of infallibility, and then to appropriate it to itself.[2] "The purest Churches under heaven," says the Confession of Faith, "are

[1] "It can easily be proved," says Bellarmine, "that the true and visible Church cannot possibly cease to exist. It must be observed, however, that many of our friends waste their time in proving that the Church, taken absolutely, must always exist. For Calvin and other heretics admit this; only they say it must be understood of the invisible Church. We will prove, therefore, that the visible Church cannot cease to exist." Tom. ii. Pars i. lib. iii. chap. xiii. Turrettin, *Op.* tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. 8–10. Hodge, Art. Perpetuity of the Church, *Brit. and For. Ev. Rev.*, vol. vi. pp. 69–90.

[2] "Our doctrine is," says Bellarmine, "that the Church absolutely cannot err, either in matters positively essential, or in others, which she propounds to us to be believed or to be done, whether these are expressly set down in Scripture or not."—Tom. ii. Pars i. lib. iii. chap. xiv. Perrone, *Prælect. Theolog.* tom. i. pp. 170–181.

subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a Church on earth to worship God according to His will."[1]

[1] Conf. c. xxv. 5. Turrettin, *Op.* tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. 11.

CHAPTER V.

THE NOTES OF THE CHURCH.

IN the case of a number of individual men, differing, it may be, widely from each other in religious opinions and practice, in creed and in character, yet all of them claiming alike to be called Christians, there must be some criterion or test by which to ascertain and decide which of them are, and which of them are not, truly entitled to the name. Such a test we actually employ when we bring the professed creed of any man to the bar of the Word of God; and according as it fundamentally agrees with or fundamentally differs from that standard, judge him to be deserving or not deserving of the name of Christian. In like manner, in the case of a number of organized societies, no less widely differing from each other in profession and in practice, in the confession of faith that they own, and the form of order and government they adopt, yet all of them claiming in common to be called Churches of Christ, and not a few of them denying that name to any body but their own, there must be some criterion or test by which to discriminate amid such opposite and conflicting pretensions, and to decide which are and which are not entitled to the name. Now, unless we are prepared to disown the Protestant principle, that the Bible is the only standard in matters of faith, we must have recourse to that volume for materials to enable us to adjudicate in the controversy. The Word of God alone can furnish us with a test whereby to decide what are or are not true Churches of God;[1] and if the essential marks and characters of a Christian Church, which distinguish it from all other societies, are plainly enough laid down in Scripture,

[1] [Inter nos et Donatistas quæstio est ubi sit Ecclesia? Quid ergo facturi sumus? In verbis nostris eam quæsituri? An in verbis capitis sui Domini nostri Jesu Christi? Puto quod in Illius verbis eam quærere debemus qui veritas est, et optime novit corpus suum.—*Aug. de Unitate Eccles.*, cap. ii. tom. ix. ed. Migne, p. 392.]

there ought to be no great difficulty in fixing upon the true criterion. In the same manner as the Bible lays down the principles by which, in their application to individuals, we are enabled to judge whether or not to concede to them the name of Christian, so also does it lay down the principles which, in their application to professedly Christian societies, will enable us to judge whether or not we ought to concede to them the title of Churches of Christ. Practically, indeed, there is considerable difficulty in the application of these principles both in the case of the individual and the society, — the difference between each respectively and the Bible standard being a question of degree, and justly depriving them of their title to be regarded as Christians or Churches, only when that difference becomes fundamental. But whatever difficulty may be found in the practical application of them, there can be no reasonable doubt that there are principles in Scripture which enable us to say what is the essential mark or character both of the man and the society who are entitled to the name respectively of a Christian and a Church of Christ. The notes or marks of a Christian Church are a proper subject for our consideration, both on account of the importance of the subject in itself, and on account of the somewhat disproportionate interest attached to the inquiry in consequence of its bearing on the Popish Church. We proceed, then, to consider what are the essential characteristics of a Church of Christ, or the notes by which it may be known and recognised.

Now, in entering upon this question, there are two preliminary distinctions, which it is of much importance to bear along with us in our inquiry.

First, there is an important distinction between what is necessary to the being of a Church, and what is necessary to its wellbeing. There are articles of belief to be found in the Word of God, or to be deduced, "by good and necessary consequence," from it, which it is both the duty and the privilege of a Christian Church to receive and embody in its creed; the denial or rejection of which, however, would not necessarily infer that it had forfeited its essential character, and ceased to be a Church at all. In like manner, there are departures from Scripture authority or example in respect to outward order and administration in a Church of Christ, in respect to its government and discipline

and worship, which, although wrong in themselves, and injurious in their operations and tendency, yet do not suffice to unchurch the Christian society, or to deprive it of its claim to be regarded as a branch of the visible Church of Christ. There is much, in short, that may be necessary to the perfection of a Church, measured and judged of by the Word of God, that is not necessary to the existence of a Church in such a sense that the want of it would exclude it from the title or privileges of a Church at all. We recognise this distinction every day in regard to a Christian man; and it is no less to be recognised in its application to a Christian society. There is many a doctrine and truth of revelation, in regard to which a man may err without ceasing on that account to be a Christian man; and there is many a duty recognised in Scripture as binding upon all, in which he may be totally deficient without forfeiting his Christianity. In other words, there is much in doctrine and duty, in faith and practice, necessary to the perfection of a believer, which is not necessary to the existence of a believer as such; and so it is with a Christian Church. What is essential to its existence as a Church, is something very different from what is essential to its perfection as a Church; and although a departure from the standard of the Word of God, either as to creed or outward administration, may be in itself sinful, and must, like every departure from Scripture, be injurious, yet it may be an error neither so fundamental nor extensive in its character as to imply, on the part of the Christian society which has been guilty of it, a forfeiture of its Church state, leaving its ministers without authority to preach, and its ordinances without virtue to bless. No doubt there is a difficulty —and that a very great one—in the practical application of such a distinction as this. It may be difficult to draw the line between what is fundamental and what is not,—between what is essential and what is non-essential to the being of a Christian Church. But the practical difficulty in applying the distinction does not do away with the distinction itself, which, in one shape or other, will make itself to be recognised as just and well founded. The difficulty in drawing the line between what is necessary and not necessary to the existence and character of an individual Christian is exactly similar to, and not less perplexing than, the difficulty in laying down what is essential or not essential to the existence and character of a Christian society. In both cases there

is a practical difficulty in applying the distinction; but in neither can it be overlooked or rejected.[1]

Secondly, there is a distinction not less important to be borne in mind, in connection with this matter, between the things for which the Church was instituted, and the things that have been instituted for the Church. This second distinction is one very often recognised and made use of by the old divines in regard to the Church; and in the present case it serves to give precision and definiteness to the first. Taken by itself, and apart from other considerations, it is not easy at first sight to lay down a principle by which to answer the question, what things are and what are not fundamental in the idea of a Christian Church; and hence the difficulty in applying practically the distinction already laid down. But if our first distinction is taken in connection with our second, the practical difficulty is, to a considerable extent, removed. There are things for the sake of which the Christian Church was itself instituted,—things, therefore, in their nature and import, paramount to the Church itself; and there are other things instituted for the sake of the Christian Church,—things, therefore, that must be subordinate in their nature and importance to the Church. This distinction is of considerable value, and not difficult, under the teaching of Scripture, to be applied. We read in Scripture that the Christian Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," and that "for this cause the Son of God Himself came, that He might bear witness to

[1] [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. i. §§ 12, 13;—where he maintains that, so long as we have the Word purely preached and the Sacraments rightly administered in any Church, we have no right to separate from it simply on the ground that it is at the same time chargeable with many faults and defects both in doctrine and practice. These things do not destroy the essence of a Church. "*Non enim unius sunt formæ omnia veræ doctrinæ capita.* Sunt quædam ita necessaria cognitu, ut fixa esse et indubitata omnibus oporteat, ceu propria religionis placita; qualia sunt, unum esse Deum; Christum Deum esse ac Dei Filium; in Dei misericordia salutem nobis consistere, et similia. Sunt alia, quæ, inter Ecclesias controversa, fidei tamen unitatem non dirimant." Then, after quoting Phil. iii. 15: "*Annon satis indicat* (*Apostolus*), *dissensionem de rebus istis non ita necessariis, dissidii materiam esse non debet inter Christianos?*" Compare Calvin's acknowledgment of a Church of Christ among the Romanists, in a certain qualified sense, as a "semirutum ædificium," while asserting, at the same time, that the Roman Pontiff is "the leader and standard-bearer of Antichrist." Lib iv. cap. ii. §§ 11, 12. See Turrettin, *Op.* tom. i. loc. i. qu. 14. iii. loc. xviii. qu. 12, 5–7. Jurieu, *L'Unité de l'Eglise*, 6me Partie; *Des Points Fundamentaux et non Fundamentaux*, pp. 493–569. Durham, *On Scandal*, Part iv. pp. 246–250, 286–292, 345–351. Litton, *Church of Christ*, pp. 495–509.]

the truth."[1] In other words, we learn that the very object for which the Church of Christ was established on the earth was to declare and uphold the truth, with all its spiritual and saving blessings, among mankind,—that truth which exhibits at once the glory of God, and in harmony and connection with that, the salvation of the sinner. For this thing, then, the Church of Christ was instituted; and this thing, or the declaration of the truth, must therefore be, in its nature and importance, paramount to the Church itself. Again, we read in Scripture that Christ "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."[2] In other words, we learn that ordinances and office-bearers have been established for the object of promoting the wellbeing and edification of the Church. These things, then, unlike the former, were instituted for the sake of the Church, and not the Church for the sake of them; and these things, therefore, must be, in their nature and importance, subordinate to the Church. Wherever this distinction can be readily and obviously applied, there can be little difficulty in answering the question: what things are fundamental and what things are not fundamental to the existence of a Church of Christ. If inquiry is made whether some particular thing is essential to the idea of a Christian Church, and to be reckoned among those fundamental characteristics without which it must cease to be a Church at all, it may not be difficult to apply the test through which an answer to the inquiry is to be obtained. Is this thing to be numbered with those for the sake of which a Church was instituted on the earth, or, rather, among those which have been instituted for the sake of the Church? If the Christian Church has been established and maintained in the world for the sake of this thing, then we cannot err in making it to be fundamental and necessary, not only to the perfection, but to the very existence, of a Church at all. If, on the other hand, this thing falls to be reckoned among those that have been instituted for the sake of the Church, then we may affirm that it is necessary for its wellbeing and advantage, but we cannot affirm that it is essential to its being.[3]

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 15; John xviii. 37. [2] Eph. iv. 11, 12.

[3] [Claude, *Defense de la Reformation:* Il ne faut jamais confondre ce qui regarde l'essence de l'Eglise avec ce qui ne regard que son estat . . . La vraye

Now, with the help of these two preliminary distinctions, it is not difficult to gather from Scripture what constitutes a Church of Christ, and what are to be accounted the real criteria or distinguishing marks of a Church.

In the first place, what is the great object for which the Christian Church was instituted, apart from those secondary and subordinate ones, which it may attain, but for which it was not primarily established? There can be no doubt that Scripture represents the one great object of the establishment of a Church in the world to be the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners, by means of the publication of the gospel. For this end the Church was instituted at first; for this end it continues to exist from one generation to another; and it is only in so far as it accomplishes this one grand object of its existence, that it serves the proper and primary purpose of a Church at all. Judging, then, by this first test, we are warranted in saying, that to hold and to preach the true faith or doctrine of Christ is the only sure and infallible note or mark of a Christian Church, because this is the one thing for the sake of which a Church of Christ has been instituted on earth. A true faith makes a true Church, and a corrupt faith a corrupt Church; and should it at any time apostatize from the true faith altogether, it would, by the very act, cease to be a Church of Christ in any sense at all. The Church was established for the sake of the truth, and not the truth for the sake of the Church.

In the second place, what are those things which, unlike the truth, have been instituted for the sake of the Church, and not the Church for the sake of them? Such, unquestionably, are the ordinances, office-bearers, and discipline which have been established within the Christian society. These being instituted for the advantage and edification of the Church, are, from their very nature, subordinate and secondary to the truth, for the holding and publication of which both they and the Church itself exist. They may be necessary, and are necessary, for the perfection of the Church, but they are not necessary for its existence. They cannot be accounted fundamental, in the sense that without them it would cease to exist as a Church at all. The single thing

et pure doctrine est de l'essence de l'Eglise, etc.—4me Partie, chap. i. p. 258 ff., ii. pp. 320–330. Turrettin, *Op.* tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. i. 7–17, and xii. 7–14. Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* B. v. chap. lxviii. 6.]

essential to the being of a Christian Church on earth is the faith or doctrine of Christ. According to the distinction already laid down, for this thing the Church was instituted, and not this thing for the Church.

Other things, such as sacraments and ordinances, the ministry, and the outward administration of the Church, are not essential to it, but only accidental; they are necessary for its wellbeing, but not for its being. According to the same distinction, these things were instituted for the Church, and not the Church for them. The only true and infallible note or mark of a Church of Christ is the profession of the faith of Christ. According to the well-known saying of Jerome, when speaking of the prevalence of Arianism in the Church of the fourth century: Ecclesia non in parietibus consistit, sed in dogmatum veritate; Ecclesia ibi est, ubi fides vera est.[1]

The one note or mark, then, which is common to every true Church, and peculiar to every true Church, is the profession of the faith of Christ. Whatever be the differences in other respects,—whatever be the distinction in outward form or administration, in ordinances, in government, in worship,—these things are subordinate to the one criterion of the profession of the true faith, which marks by its presence a true Church, and declares by its absence an apostate one. It is not the succession of outward forms and ordinances, the hereditary derivation from primitive times of a ministry and sacraments, that constitute a Church of Christ, or lay the foundation for its character and privileges. These things were made for the Church, and not the Church for them. These things may be good to provide for its wellbeing; they will not suffice to prove its existence. It is the succession of the truth alone that marks out a Christian Church; and the stamp of birth and lineage that belongs to it is not the outward apostolic pedigree of its ministers, but the heritage of that faith which apostles first taught and published. It is not the want of a spotless ecclesiastical genealogy, or of sacraments derived by regular succession from primitive times, that will unchurch a Christian society, but the want of that apostolic doctrine which alone marks out a Church of Christ. At this point, and in the

[1] Hieronym. in Ps. cxxxiii. *Op.* tom. ii. p. 472, Benedictine ed. [*μη γαρ ἐν τοιχοις ἡ Ἐκκλησια; Ἐν τῳ πληθει των πιστων ἡ Ἐκκλησια. Ἰδου ποσοι στυλοι ἑδραιοι, οὐ σιδηρῳ δεδεμενοι, ἀλλα πιστει ἐσφιγμενοι.*—Chrysostom, *Hom. ante Exsil*, ed. Migne, tom. ii. Pars ii. p. 429.]

very definition of a Church, begins that error which is developed in the intolerant principles of many in the present day who would unchurch all denominations but their own; and which manifests itself also in that outward formalism—Popish or Tractarian—which ascribes to external ordinances a value and sacredness which belong only to the truth as it is in Jesus. Admit that the possession of a true faith, and that alone, is of the essence of a Church,—and you assign to the truth the place and importance that rightfully belong to it. But join to the possession of the true faith the administration of outward ordinances, as necessary to constitute a Christian Church,—and you assign to outward ordinances a rank and value which are not justly theirs, and make them of primary, and not, as they truly are, of secondary importance.

There is a difference in this respect, and not an undesigned or unimportant one, in the definition given of a Church in the Articles of the Church of England on the one hand, and the Confession of Faith of our Church on the other. The Westminster Confession limits the definition of a Church to the profession of the true religion, as the one essential mark of a true Church. The Articles of the Church of England include, under the definition of a Church, not only the profession of the true religion, but also the right administration of the sacraments. "The visible Church," says the Westminster Confession, "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children."[1] "The visible Church of Christ," says the 19th Article of the Church of England, "is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."[2] We are told by Bishop Burnet, that the language of this Article and of the 23d ("of ministering in the congregation") was so selected, as not necessarily to include in the idea of a Church the doctrine of an "apostolical succession" of the ministry as requisite to the valid and regular dispensation of the sacraments; and not, therefore, necessarily to exclude those Christian communities who claimed no such ministry.[3] But the introduction of the idea of

[1] Conf. chap. xxv. 2. [2] Art. xix.

[3] Burnet, *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Oxford 1845, pp. 209, 210, 288–290. [Dean Goode, *Non-Episcopal Orders*, Lond. 1852, p. 26 ff.]

the administration of the sacraments, as being of the essence of a Church, marks the difference between the definition of the Church as given in the XXXIX Articles and in the Westminster Confession. There is no doubt that the profession of the true faith by a Christian Church will, in all ordinary circumstances, necessarily lead to the establishment and administration of the sacraments also; and in this way the profession of the faith may be said to imply or infer the outward ordinances likewise. In this somewhat loose and popular sense, the sacraments, as well as the profession of the faith, may be said to belong to the idea of a Christian Church; and many writers, in so defining a Church, have meant no more.[1] But, in a strict and logical definition of it, there enters into the essence of a Church nothing but what is assigned to it in the Westminster Confession,—namely, the profession of the true religion of Christ. And I have no doubt that it was to avoid the danger of those intolerant and mischievous consequences that might be deduced from the introduction of it, that the element of the administration of the sacraments is excluded from the definition of a Church in our Confession. That outward ordinances are not fundamental or essential to a Church, is plain from the fact that they are of those things made for the Church, and not of those for which the Church was made. That the possession of the truth is, on the contrary, fundamental and essential to the idea of a Church, is apparent from the fact that the Church was instituted for the truth, and not the truth for the Church.[2]

[1] [Quamvis in assignandis veræ Ecclesiæ notis quædam in verbis occurrat diversitas inter orthodoxos, in reipsa tamen est consensus. Nam sive unica dicatur, doctrinæ scilicet veritas et conformitas cum Dei Verbo, sive plures, pura scilicet Verbi prædicatio cum legitima sacramentorum administratione, quibus alii addunt disciplinæ exercitium, et sanctitatem vitæ seu obedientiam Verbo præstitam, res eodem redit. Nam ubi veritas publice obtinet, ibi quoque suo modo vigent charitas et sanctitas; nec potest purum Dei Verbum alicubi prædicari, quin ibidem et sacramenta legitime administrentur, et disciplina Dei Verbo præscripta obtineat et vigeat, cum hæc duo ex Dei Verbo fluant, et sint ejus appendices. In primo gradu necessitatis est pura Verbi prædicatio et professio, utpote sine qua Ecclesia esse non potest. Sed non parem habet necessitatis gradum sacramentorum administratio, quæ ita ex priore pendet ut abesse tamen ad tempus possit, ut visum in Ecclesia Israelitica in deserto, quæ caruit circumcisione. Eadem est disciplinæ ratio, quæ ad tuendum Ecclesiæ statum pertinet, sed qua sublata vel corrupta, non statim tollitur Ecclesia, etc.—Turrettin, loc. xviii. qu. 12, 6, 7.]

[2] It is interesting to observe the gradual progress made from the somewhat loose and popular definitions of the Church visible, commonly given at the Reformation, to the stricter and more scientific definitions of the seventeenth century. This fact, like other similar ones, has been very unfairly

The adherents of the Church of Rome have been accustomed to exclude from the notes or marks of the Church the only one really essential to it,—namely, the possession of the true faith of Christ,—and to multiply the number of other marks, which are not essential or peculiar to it. It was impossible for them, consistently with their own principles, to admit that the true faith was a note or mark through which the Church might be known; for the very foundation of their system is, that the faith can be known only through the Church, and not the Church through the faith. And they have been accustomed to multiply non-essential marks of the Church, of an outward and formal kind, with the twofold object,—first, of more certainly unchurching all other religious bodies destitute of these marks; and, secondly, of building up the better the external system of rites and observances of which Popery consists. Cardinal Bellarmine, for example, lays down fifteen different notes or marks of the true Church: 1. The possession of the name Catholic; 2. Antiquity; 3. Continued and uninterrupted duration; 4. Extent or multitude of believers; 5. Succession of bishops; 6. Agreement in doctrine with the ancient

seized upon by Bossuet, as a signal instance of fundamental change of opinion among the Protestant Churches. (*Variations*, vol. ii. pp. 283–313.) A good example of it is to be found in the symbolical books of our own Church. Thus, in the "Confession of Faith, used in the English congregation at Geneva, received and approved by the Church of Scotland in the beginning of the Reformation," we are told: "That Church, which is visible and seen to the eye, hath three tokens or marks, whereby it may be known. First, the Word of God contained in the Old and New Testament. . . . Second, the holy Sacraments, to wit, of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. . . . Third, Ecclesiastical Discipline." The Scots Confession of Faith of 1560 says: "The notes, signes, and assured takens, whereby the immaculate Spouse of Christ Jesus is knawen fra the horrible harlot, the Kirk malignant, we affirme, are nouther Antiquitie, Title usurpit, lineal Descence, Place appointed, nor multitude of men approving ane error. . . . The notes of the trew Kirk of God we beleeve, confesse, and avow to be,—first, the trew preaching of the Word of God; . . . secondly, the right administration of the Sacraments of Christ Jesus; . . . last, Ecclesiastical Discipline uprightlie ministred, as Goddis Worde prescribes."

In the Second Book of Discipline, sanctioned by the General Assembly of 1578, the more precise definition appears: "The Kirk of God is sumtymes largelie takin, for all them that professe the Evangill of Jesus Christ; and so it is a Company and Fellowship not onely of the Godly, but also of Hypocrites, professing alwayis outwardly ane true Religion."—Dunlop, *Collection of Confessions of Faith*, etc., vol. ii. pp. 8, 65, 759. "The visible Church," says the Westminster Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assembly in 1647, "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." [Comp. Matthes, *Comparative Symbolik aller christl. Confessionen*, pp. 605–617. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 28–30.]

Church; 7. Union of members among themselves and with the Head; 8. Sanctity of doctrine; 9. Efficacy of doctrine; 10. Holiness of life; 11. The glory of miracles; 12. The right of prophecy; 13. The confession of adversaries; 14. The unhappy end of the Church's adversaries; and, 15. Temporal felicity.[1] The more modern champions of Rome have generally abandoned the greater number of the notes which Bellarmine has ascribed to the Church, and have contented themselves with a somewhat more moderate list. Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome, has, in his *Prælectiones Theologicæ*, laid down four marks or notes of the Church. These are taken from the terms of the Nicene or Constantinopolitan creed, and are: 1st, Unity; 2d, Sanctity; 3d, Catholicity; 4th, Apostolicity.[2] Now, there are three observations which it may not be unimportant to make on these notes of the Church.

In the first place, were we to take these four notes in the ordinary meaning of the terms in which they are announced, we might still object to them as not in strictness to be accounted of the essence of a Church, and therefore not properly entering into the definition of one, but rather as properties belonging to it, more or less, although not peculiar to it, and not distinguishing it from all other bodies. This would be a valid objection; although it might be hardly worth while to found a controversy upon it. In the proper sense of the terms, Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity belong, more or less, to the Christian Church, in consequence of the Church holding and professing the true faith of Christ; and, taking them in this meaning, all that we could object to them, as notes of the Church, is, that they are not peculiar to the Church, but *may* belong to other societies as well.

But, in the second place, the ordinary and proper meaning of the terms, "One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic," is not the meaning put upon them by Perrone and other Romish controversialists, when they use the words as notes of the Church; nor would that meaning serve their purpose in employing them. That "unity," which is a mark of the Church in the estimation of Perrone and

[1] Bellarm. *Op.* tom. ii. lib. iv. cap. 3, where he remarks that Driedo and Petrus à Soto had laid down three notes of the Church; Cardinal Hosius, four; Nicolas Sanders, six; Michael Medina, eleven; Cuuerus Petri, twelve; but that he himself intended to propound fifteen.

[2] Perrone, *Prælect. Theol.* tom. ii. p. 716.

other Papists, is not a spiritual unity, consisting of the fellowship of all true believers in one Spirit or one faith, but an outward unity, resulting from their external submission to one central authority and one infallible head in the visible Church. That "sanctity," which is held out as a note of the Church, is not a holiness through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, but is the outward holiness of penance and absolution and indulgence, and the outward manifestation of supernatural grace and miracle in the Church. That "catholicity" which is appealed to as marking the Church, is not the unlimited adaptation of the Christian Church to all, without exception of classes or countries, but a formal and outward uniformity both of profession and administration, of belief and worship, through all the branches of the Christian society. And, finally, that "apostolicity" which is laid down as a distinguishing criterion of the true Church, is not a conformity to apostolic faith or example, but a public and formal succession of ministers and sacraments, without interruption or mixture, since the days of the apostles until our own. The notes of the Church as laid down by Perrone, when thus understood, are plainly designed to support and extend the pretensions of the Romish power, by unchurching all other denominations, and leaving them without the name and the privileges of a Church at all.

In the third place, the Romish notes of the Church are fitted and designed to invert the order in which the Church of Christ and the truth of Christ stand to each other. I have already remarked that the possession of the truth is, with Romish controversialists, no mark of the Christian Church at all. It is expressly excluded by them; and for this reason, that, according to their system, the truth is known through the Church, and not rather the Church through the truth. With Popery the first and leading idea is the Church, viewed as a system of outward authority and outward ordinances, and known by certain visible and formal marks. According to the Romish theory, the first and primary obligation incumbent on all is to recognise the Church, and to submit implicitly to its authority and observances. Second merely to the Church, and subordinate to it, is the idea of the truth of Christ, which can be known only through the teaching of the Church; and the inferior obligation, and not the principal, is the obligation of embracing the truth of Christ on the authority of the

Church.[1] I do not stop to point out the strange and vicious circle in reasoning which such a system necessarily implies, sending us to the authority of Scripture to find the notes of the true Church, and then sending us to the true Church to find the authority of Scripture; but it is plain that the Popish doctrine on the subject of the Church goes to invert the order in which the truth of Christ and the Church of Christ stand in relation to each other. That doctrine would be a reasonable and even scriptural one, if, to recur once more to our former distinction, the truth had been instituted for the sake of the Church, and not rather the Church instituted for the sake of the truth; or if in any sense it could be alleged that the faith of Christ was, in place and importance, secondary and subordinate to the outward Christian society. But the very reverse of all this is the case. The very first and leading element in the idea of a Christian man is the faith that he holds. It is the true faith that makes and marks him a true Christian; and so it is with the Christian society which we call the Church. It is the true faith that makes and marks the true Church, and not the true Church that makes the true faith. And instead of seeking, in the first instance, and as the primary duty incumbent on us, for the true Church, in order that we may have and know what is the faith, we must just reverse the process, and seek, in the first place, and as the primary duty, for the faith, in order that we may be able to know what the Church is. In reversing the order in which the truth of Christ and the Church of Christ stand to each other, and in making the former depend on the latter, instead of the latter on the former, the Popish doctrine has succeeded in working out amid its adherents these two objects,—first, the support of its own arrogant and exclusive pretensions to unchurch every denomination but its own; and, secondly, the substitution of a huge system of outward authority and outward

[1] ["The sum of what they (the Romanists) insist upon is: The Catholic Church is intrusted with the interpretation of the Scripture, and declaration of the truths therein contained; which being by it so declared, the not receiving of them implicitly or explicitly—that is, the disbelieving of them as so proposed and declared—cuts off any man from being a member of the Church, Christ Himself having said, that he that hears not the Church is to be a heathen man and a publican; which Church they are, that is certain. It is all one, then, what we believe or do not believe, seeing that we believe not all that the Catholic Church proposeth to be believed, and what we do believe, we believe not on that account."—Owen, *On Schism*, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xiii. p. 153.]

observances in the place of a living and spiritual faith in the truth.[1]

[1] [Ames. *Bellarminus Enervatus*, tom. ii. lib. ii. cap. 3; Turrett. *Op.* tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. 12–15; Litton, *Church of Christ*, pp. 359–382. "It is worthy of remark," says Mr. Litton, "that every theory of the Church, whether it profess to be Romanist or not, which teaches that the true being thereof lies in its visible characteristics, adopts instinctively the Romish notes, and rejects the Protestant; though it is only Papal Romanism that can legitimately and consistently do so. See, for example, Palmer's *Treatise on the Church*, Part i. chap. ii."—P. 362. For the views of the Greek Church on this subject, see the references to its symbolical books, given in Matthes' *Comparative Symbolik*, pp. 604, 605.]

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

In close connection with the subject of the notes or marks of the Church stands the question: What are the qualifications that give a right of admission within the Christian society? In other words: Who are entitled to the position and privileges of members of the Church? To this subject it seems desirable that we should now direct our attention.

In entering upon the discussion of this question, it is necessary to take along with us the important distinction, so frequently referred to, between the invisible and the visible Church. What is necessary to constitute a man a member of the invisible Church, is a very different thing from what is necessary to constitute a man a member of the visible Church of Christ. Let us, in the first place, advert briefly to the question: What is necessary to make one a member of the invisible Church?

I. Now, in answering the question, Who are and who are not members of the invisible Church of Christ? all that is necessary is, to keep distinctly in view the true nature and real character of that society. The Scriptures assure us that there is a Church which is the holy Bride of Christ, united to Him in an everlasting covenant,—a society which He calls His spiritual Body, and of which He is the exalted Head,—a community described as "a temple of the Holy Ghost," the members of which are "lively and spiritual stones" in the building. Such marks and privileges as these belong to no visible and outward society, whose features can be traced, and whose character read, by man. In such statements of Scripture we recognise the invisible Church of Christ, known only to Himself, the members of which are included within the bonds of His electing grace. "The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible," says the Confession of Faith, "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are,

or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof."[1] It is restricted to no one time and no one place, but embraces the elect of all times and all places, without distinction and without exception. In the history of the past, it comprehends all who from the beginning have been chosen unto salvation, and effectually called by the Spirit; and in the history of the future, it embraces all who, till the dispensation of grace is brought to a close, shall be numbered with those who are adopted into the house and family of Christ. In heaven it can count a multitude, which no man can number, of those who have already been redeemed from the earth; and in this world it can reckon up another multitude, one with the family in heaven, who are either already believers, or who shall yet believe unto life eternal. The Church invisible consists, in short, of the whole number of the elect; and the terms of membership in the Church invisible are, to have a place and a name within the bonds and the privileges of the everlasting covenant.

In thus defining the members of the invisible Church of Christ to be the whole body of the elect throughout all places and all time, we are met by the counter-statements of the Popish Church. There is some considerable difference of opinion, at first sight at least, between former and more recent Romanists, regarding this matter. In former times, controversialists on the side of Rome were accustomed to deny the existence of an invisible Church altogether, and to affirm that the Christian society was singly and exclusively to be regarded as an outward and visible kingdom.[2] And it followed as a necessary consequence from this assertion, that the terms of membership were not an interest in the covenant of grace, but an outward union to an outward Church. By Romanists in former times, the question, "What is necessary for

[1] Conf. chap. xxv. 1.

[2] "There is this difference," says Bellarmine, "between our view and all the others,"—those of the Reformers, namely, which he has just been recounting,—"that they all require internal virtues to constitute a man a member of the Church; and therefore they make the true Church invisible. We, again, believe also, that all virtues—faith, hope, charity, and the rest—are to be found in the Church. Nevertheless, we hold that no internal virtue is required, in order that a man may be said, in a certain sense, to be a part of the true Church of which the Scripture speaks, but only an external profession of faith, and the communion in the Sacraments, which is received by sense itself. *For the Church is a body of men as visible and palpable as the assembly of the Roman people, or the kingdom of France, or the republic of Venice.*"—*Op.* tom. ii. lib. iii. cap. 2.

admission to the Christian Church?" was met by the simple reply: "A professed submission to the see of Rome."[1] In more recent times, the denial of an invisible Church, as possessing a corporate existence and privileges, has been in some measure abandoned as untenable; and the extreme opinions of Bossuet and other Romish controversialists have been, to a considerable extent, modified by their successors. Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome, admits in some sort the twofold character of the Church as invisible and visible, but denies that the members of the invisible Church are made up of the elect, and of them only. There is a twofold difference in this respect between his views and the principles already laid down. In the first place, he denies that the invisible Church is made up of *all* the elect, and affirms that such of them as have not yet obeyed the outward call of the Church, and are not found in its visible communion, although numbered with the elect of God, cannot be reckoned as members of the invisible Church; and, in the second place, he denies that the invisible Church is made up of the elect *only*, asserting that those who have ever received grace through the ordinances and communion of the Church, even though they should afterwards fall away and become reprobate, are nevertheless to be accounted true members of the invisible Church of Christ.[2]

In both these respects, in which Romanists differ from the received doctrine of Protestants in regard to the members of the invisible Church, it is not difficult to trace the one ruling and predominating idea which runs through the whole of the Popish system,—namely, the necessity and virtue of the outward grace communicated by the Church, instead of the inward call and

[1] ["We declare, assert, define, and pronounce," says Boniface VIII. in the Bull *Unam Sanctam*, "that it is altogether of necessity of salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff." "Subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanæ creaturæ declaramus, dicimus, definimus, et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis." Bellarm. *Op.* tom. ii. lib. iii. cap. 2, § 9, and cap. 5: "No one can, even if he would, be subject to Christ, and be in communion with the Church in heaven, who is not subject to the Pontiff, and in communion with the Church militant; for Christ says, 'He that heareth you heareth me.' And, moreover, just as Christ is the supreme Head as regards internal influence (for He Himself infuses into His members sense and motion, that is, faith and charity), so the Pope is the supreme Head in the Church militant, as regards the external infusion of the doctrine of the faith and of the Sacraments."]

[2] Perrone, *Prælect. Theolog.* tom. ii. pp. 707–715.

election by God. We see it in their denial of the name and right of members of the invisible Church to those who have been elected and chosen by God, but who, being still unconverted, have not yet joined themselves to the visible Church on earth, or become partakers of its outward ordinances. We see it, in like manner, in their ascription of the title and right of members of the invisible Church to those not chosen and not elected by God, but only joined to the visible Church, and sharing in its outward grace, notwithstanding that they shall afterwards fall away, and prove themselves to be reprobate. In both cases it is the grace given or denied by the Church to the sinner, that confers or withholds the title of a member of the invisible Church of Christ, and not rather the purpose and election of God, calling him to the adoption and privileges of a son. In the one instance, although actually chosen and elected by God unto salvation, the man is *no* member of the invisible Church, because he has not yet shared in the grace which the Church on earth confers. In the other instance, although reprobate and rejected by God, the man *is* a member of the invisible Church, because he has been privileged to receive from the Church on earth the grace that it imparts to all in outward communion with it. Such principles as these, if they do not, as in the case of former Romanists, lead to an open denial of the existence of an invisible Church at all, yet plainly supersede it in reality, or make it virtually subordinate to and dependent on the visible Church. The membership of the invisible Church is a right not waiting to be realized, or needing to be confirmed, through the grace imparted by an outward society: the terms of that membership hold of a higher source. The right is a right conferred by the election of God. The invisible Church is made up of the whole number of the elect throughout all time, who have been chosen of God unto the salvation of Jesus Christ.[1]

II. But let us next advert to the question: What is necessary to make one a member of the visible Church of Christ?

To answer this second question, it is only needful to bear in mind the true nature of the visible as contradistinguished from the invisible Church. The visible Church consists of the whole body, not of the elect, but of professing Christians, scattered throughout the world. The profession of the true faith is that

[1] Apollonius, *Consideratio*, cap. i. pp. 2–4. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. i. §§ 2, 3, 7, 8.]

which is the essence of the visible Church, distinguishing it from all other societies, and constituting it the Church of Christ; and what constitutes the mark of the visible Church, considered as a separate body, is also the mark of every member of the Church, considered simply as a member. The profession of the true faith, as it makes a Christian Church, so also is it the single element that makes a member of the Church, giving a right to its privileges, and a place in its communion. A visible profession of belief in the Gospel—comprehending under the word profession not only the confession of the lips, but also a corresponding life and conduct—is the single qualification necessary to rank a man a member of the visible Church of Christ.[1]

Now, the principle just enunciated stands opposed to the views of the Romanists on the one hand, and the Independents on the other; and it may serve to illustrate both its import and its truth, to contrast it with the doctrines of these two parties in succession. I have said, that to give a man a right to the membership of the visible Church there is needed that he maintain a visible Christian profession, including and accredited by a corresponding life and conduct. Now, this is objected against by the Independents as insufficient, while it is objected against by the Romanists as unnecessary, to constitute a man a member of the visible Church. Let us advert, in the first instance, to the principles of the Popish Church in their bearing on this question.

1*st*, I have already had occasion to remark that the predominating principle of the Romish system, in reference to the Church, is the substitution of an outward authority and the grace of outward ordinances in the place of any spiritual or inward influence on the heart, and the subordination of the truth of Christ to the external Church. With this leading idea, it is not to be wondered at that Romanists should make an outward conformity to Church authority and ordinances the single test of membership in the Christian society, altogether apart from an intelligent profession of the truth, and from an outward conduct in accordance with that profession. The virtue of submission to the authority of the Church visible, and the grace communicated by its outward ordinances, are enough of themselves, independently of a voluntary profession of faith and corresponding conduct, to constitute a

[1] Apollonius, *Consid. Quar. Controv.* cap. i. pp. 1-9. Amesius, *Medulla*, lib. i. cap. xxxii. 7-17. Whytock, *Vind. of Presbytery, etc.*, pp. 103–115.

man a member of the Christian society. This would be true, if it were also true that the profession of the true faith is not the essential mark of a Christian Church; or if its character consisted primarily in being an outward institute for the communication of sacramental grace. But if, on the other hand, it be of the essence of a Christian Church to profess the faith of Christ, it must also be a requisite, on the part of a member of the Church, to make the same profession; and further, that his conduct and character do not make the profession void and worthless. The mere surrender of the understanding to the dictation of the Church in matters of faith, and the formal subjection of the outward man to its ordinances, can be no proper substitute for the intelligent profession of the truth of Christ, and the voluntary conformity of the life to the profession, which constitute the true qualifications for the membership of the Christian society. To receive as from the Church the truth to be believed, and the profession to be made, is the very opposite of bringing to the Church the testimony of the truth already believed and professed. To submit our outward conduct to the authority of the Church blindly and mechanically, is the very reverse of the willing and intelligent obedience which accredits and confirms the belief or profession avowed. The Popish theory of Church membership inverts the relation in which the Christian society and the members of the society stand to each other. A member of the Christian society is not to receive from the Church, but to give to it, the profession of his faith, as a voluntary testimony, on his part, to its character as the true Church of Christ. He is not to take his rule of obedience from the Church, but to bring to the Church his obedience, as a pledge and evidence that his profession is sincere. A mere outward conformity to Church authority, and a blind submission to Church ordinances, can never, if we judge by the Scripture standard, entitle a man to the place or privileges of a member of the Christian society.

2*d*, But let us advert next to the principles of Independency, as they bear upon the question of the membership of the Christian Church. I have said that Independents regard the qualifications already laid down as insufficient to entitle a man to be called a member of the visible Church of Christ. Something more than this is demanded. Positive evidence of a credible kind that a man is a true believer, and savingly united to Christ, is

alone held to be a sufficient warrant to admit him within the Christian society,—the work of grace effected in his soul being accounted the only ground or condition of Church membership.[1] The difference between the principles of the Independents on the one hand, and those of Presbyterians on the other, is broad and fundamental. With Independents, a saving belief in Christ is the only title to admission to the Christian society; and the candidate for admission is bound to bring with him at least credible evidence to prove that such a title belongs to him, and that he has been effectually called unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. With Presbyterians, on the other hand, an intelligent profession of belief in the Gospel is the title to admission to Church membership; and the candidate for admission is only required to show that his conduct and life are in accordance with and accredit his profession. Let us endeavour briefly to apply the principles of Scripture to these different systems.

In the first place, the Independent system of Church membership is founded on a denial of the distinction between the invisible and visible Church of Christ.

We admit that the title of admission to the Church, viewed as the invisible Church of Christ, is a real and saving belief in Him; and that none can be members in reality of that society who are destitute of such a faith. In regard to this there can be no dispute. A mere outward profession of faith, however credible in itself, and however strongly confirmed by an outward walk and conversation, can never, as an outward profession, and no more, give a title to the privileges, or a place among the number, of the elect of God. And were there no other aspect under which the Church was spoken of or recognised in Scripture, we would not be warranted in saying that any were members of it save true believers only. But we have seen that there are manifold statements in Scripture which cannot well be reconciled with the notion of a purely invisible Church, and which appear to require us to admit the existence of another Church, or rather the same Church under a second aspect, having a character and a membership altogether different from the first. It is not merely that the invisible Church is made up of a number of men whose outward profession as Christians is visible publicly to the eye. There seems to be good ground in Scripture for asserting that

[1] Wardlaw, *Congregational Independency*, chap. iii. pp. 86-135.

the Church, as a visible society, has a corporate existence and character, and that in this character it has certain privileges and certain members, distinct from those that belong to it as an invisible society. That some outward provision of ordinances has been made by Christ for the benefit of His Church, no one can deny; that men are invited and warranted to make use of this outward provision, and that certain benefits and privileges in consequence of their obeying the invitation are made over to them, apart from those of a saving kind,—seem to be no less clearly shown in Scripture. The Church of Christ stands revealed before the eyes of men, embodied in an outward system of administration and ordinances and discipline; and men are called upon to enter within this Church, and are promised that, if they do so, they shall enjoy certain advantages even outwardly, and distinct from any saving benefits in this Church state.

That such is the amount of what may be gathered from Scripture, it were not, I think, very easy to deny. And if so, what is the conclusion to which we are shut up? We have plainly seen a visible society, marked out as a corporate body by privileges and promises, belonging to its members, not as individuals but as members of the society; and we have these privileges and promises, apart altogether from other saving blessings, conferred upon it by Christ its Head. In other words, we have a visible Church, standing in an outward relation to Christ, distinct from the inward and spiritual relation in which it stands to Him as the invisible Church, and made up of members complying with His external call, entering into a Church state, and receiving in return outward privileges, and the fulfilment of outward promises from Him.

By whatever name it may be called, this outward relationship with Christ is, to all intents and purposes, a covenant or federal one. We have the two distinguishing characteristics of a covenant,—namely, first, certain outward conditions enjoined; and, second, certain outward promises annexed to a compliance with these conditions.[1] On the one side, we have an outward profession of faith and an entrance within a Church state, as the conditions fulfilled on the part of those who join themselves to the

[1] "Wherever there is a promise by one person to another, suspended upon the performance of a condition, there is a covenant."—Hodge, *Essays and Reviews*, p. 175.

Christian society; and, on the other side, we have, as following upon this fulfilment, the bestowment of certain outward privileges, to be enjoyed by the members of the Church in its ministry, ordinances, and administration. In short, we have a visible or outward Church, distinct from the invisible or inward; and we have members admitted to that Church upon grounds and conditions different from those on which the members of the other are admitted.

In the second place, the principles of Independency seem to be contrary to the analogy of all God's dispensations with men.

In the history of God's former covenants there seems always to be the principle of an outward and an inward life. There are two covenants, as it were, the one within the other,—the one outward and, so to speak, carnal, and the other inward and spiritual; and the outward one designed and intended to lead on to the inward. So it was in the covenant established with Noah. It had its outward and its inward form, its more carnal and its more spiritual character or aspect. There was the outward covenant made with Noah and his whole posterity, without exception, whereby God promised that the settled order of nature should never again be subverted, but that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, should not cease; and there was the inward covenant or promise of grace given to God's peculiar people, on the ground of the sweet-smelling sacrifice, which He accepted as the type and earnest of a better to come. Within the bosom of the outward covenant, which promised forbearance and long-suffering to all men, there lay hid the promise of grace to the Church of God; and the forbearance and long-suffering ensured by the outward covenant were designed to lead men onward to the grace promised by the inward. So it was in the case of the covenant with Abraham. There was the outward promise of Canaan, and the admission to the benefits of that promise by means of the external rite of circumcision; and there was the spiritual promise, that lay within the other, of a higher rest, and "a better country, that is, an heavenly;" and the admission to that promise by means, not of the circumcision of the flesh, but of the faith of the heart. In this case, too, the outward covenant was designed to lead on those who shared in it to the saving benefits of the inner and spiritual one. So it was in the case of the covenant with Israel of old. Here, likewise,

there was an outward and an inward covenant. There was an outward covenant made with Israel after the flesh, embracing many advantages and privileges of a temporal kind; but there was an inward covenant made with Israel after the spirit, comprehended and encircled within the former, and containing the promise of blessings, of a spiritual and saving kind, to the true Israel of God. And here, in like manner, the outward was made subordinate and subservient to the inward, and designed to lead men on from the one to the other.

There is a close parallelism in this respect between those ancient dispensations of God, and that under which we now live. We have now, as we have ever had in former times, an outward and an inward covenant,—the one comprehended and encircled within the other. We have an outward and visible Church now, characterized, as of old, by an external administration, and numbering among its members those admitted by an external profession. But, embraced within that outward Church, and encircled by it, we have the invisible and spiritual one characterized by the promise, not of outward but of inward blessings, and numbering among its members none but those spiritually united to the Saviour. And precisely as in former instances of the kind, this outward Church is subordinate and subservient to the interests of the inward, and is designed to guide and advance the members onward, until they reach the blessings of the spiritual Church within. Is there no reason to say that, if there had been, as the Independents allege, no visible Church with its outward provision of ordinances, and membership embracing the invisible and spiritual, it would have been traversing the analogy of all God's former dispensations towards men, and reversing the principles of all His previous dealings with them? In the doctrines of a visible and invisible Church we simply see the realization, in the present, of the principles of every former economy of God.[1]

In the third place, there seems to be much more than a mere analogy to be gathered from Scripture in favour of a visible Church, made up of outward or professing Christians, and not of true believers exclusively. The express delineation of the visible Church given in Scripture, and that frequently, seems to be totally

[1] Ayton, *Constitution of the Christian Church*, chap. ii. § iii. pp. 118–121. Whytock, *Vind. of Presbytery, etc.*, pp. 130–217.

inconsistent with the idea of a society, the terms of membership in which are, a true faith and saving interest in Christ.

It is unnecessary to go over at length the numerous passages of Scripture, sufficiently familiar to all, in which such an idea seems to be expressly excluded or contradicted. The kingdom of God, or visible Church, is compared at one time to a field, where both tares and wheat are found growing together; at another time, to a net cast into the sea, and enclosing and bringing to shore both good and bad; at a third time, to a house in which there are vessels, some to honour, and some to dishonour; at a fourth time, to a wedding supper, where there are guests without the marriage garment; and again to a fold, with a mingled flock of sheep and goats. Such, as described in Scripture, is the condition of the visible Church of Christ in this world, made up of the real and the nominal believer, of the true and the hypocritical Christian, of the elect and the reprobate. It is vain to allege, as the advocates of Independent views are fond of alleging, that such descriptions merely indicate the actual state of the Church on earth, in consequence of the infirmity or charity in judgment of those whose office it is to receive or exclude the candidates for admission, and that it by no means represents what the Church was intended or in duty bound to be.[1] As if to anticipate and meet such a plea beforehand, our Lord, in the parable of the tares, expressly declares it to be His will, that His servants should not attempt to separate between the righteous and the wicked, the tares and the wheat, even when the difference was known to them, but should let both grow together until the harvest; adding as His reason, the danger lest in pulling up the tares they should destroy the wheat also. There cannot, I think, be a more express and explicit answer to the objection of Independents, that such delineations refer to the Church as it is, not to the Church as it ought to be; and it seems to leave no reason to doubt, that in regard to the Christian society on earth, it is neither possible, nor designed, that it should be a community framed on the principle of excluding all but the regenerate from among its members. The visible Church can never be completely, or in all its parts, identical in this world with the invisible; nor can its members ever be restricted to the elect alone.

In the fourth place, the principles of the Independents in

[1] Wardlaw, *Congregational Independency*, pp. 106–123, 132–135.

regard to Church membership seem to transfer the responsibility of the admission or non-admission of parties to the Christian Church, from a ground on which it may be competent to exercise it, to a ground on which it is not competent to exercise it.

So long as the terms of Church membership are acknowledged to be a visible religious profession, and a corresponding character and conduct to accredit it, there can, with ordinary intelligence and singleness of desire for the purity of the house of God, be no great difficulty in deciding upon such kind of evidence. Thus far, and up to this point, there is a definite rule to walk by, and a competent knowledge to enable the office-bearers of the Christian society to judge in the matter. They have power to judge of the outward profession and outward conduct of the candidate for Church membership; and having the power, they are responsible for the right exercise of it. But when the judgment is transferred from the external profession and character to the inward conviction and experience of the candidate,—when, instead of being called upon to determine the credibility of what is seen and may be known in the outward man, the office-bearers of the Church are charged to decide upon the reality of what is unseen and cannot be certainly known in the inner man,—it is plain that there is a task committed to them which they are utterly incompetent and unqualified to discharge. They can be no witness to the secret work of God done on the soul of a brother; they can have no knowledge of the reality of that mysterious transaction by which to himself, but not to other men, it may be made manifest that he has passed from darkness to light; they can have no evidence sufficient to guide them in seriously pronouncing a judgment on the state of grace, or the opposite, of a candidate for Church membership. The knowledge and the evidence of such a saving experience must, from the very nature of the case, lie only between God and the man with whom God has graciously dealt; and are a knowledge and an evidence which another can neither understand nor receive. The man himself, whose experience it is that God has done the work of conviction and conversion on his soul, may have the knowledge, and underlie the responsibility involved in it. A stranger can neither share in the one, nor is competent to undertake the other. And if, in the admission to the membership of the Church, direct evidence of a state of grace on the part of the

person admitted is required, the decision upon the question involves a responsibility which the office-bearers of the Church cannot take, because they cannot have the knowledge necessary for it, and a responsibility which the person himself cannot transfer to them, because he cannot communicate along with it that knowledge. The power to look upon the heart, and to judge of its spiritual state, is a power which God challenges as His own; and man, even although willing to transfer such judgment to a fellow-man, has not the power to do so. In leading evidence, and attempting to sit in judgment on the spiritual state, as in the sight of God, of others, men are trespassing into a province where it is not lawful for them to enter. In erecting a spiritual inquisition for the judgment of such matters, they are setting up a tribunal whose inquiries they have not knowledge to direct, and whose decisions they have not received authority to pronounce. It is not the judgment of charity, in defect of more perfect knowledge, pronounced about the spiritual state of any man, that ought to form the reason for his admission to Church membership; but it is the judgment of justice, with competent knowledge, pronounced on his visible profession and his outward conduct. The judgment on his spiritual state belongs only to God, and may form the reason for his admission among the members of the invisible Church. The judgment on his outward profession belongs to man, and ought to form the only ground of his admission to, or exclusion from, the membership of the visible Church.[1]

[1] Wood, *Little Stone, etc.*, Part i. § ix. pp. 127–168. Ayton, *Constitution of the Christian Church*, chap. ii. § iii. pp. 108–167. Neander, *Church Hist.* Torrey's Transl. vol. i. pp. 336–338, vol. iii. pp. 270–284.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO THE WORLD.

WHEN Christ, having finished His obedience on earth, ascended up on high, and was no longer seen among men, the work wrought by Him during His earthly life did not cease with Him, but was destined to lay the foundation for a permanent and enduring system in the world. He Himself, by His obedience unto death, had prepared the way for the return and reconciliation of mankind to God; and when He left this earth, He made provision for the progress and development, in His absence, of that great work by which, from out of every nation and through every age, His own elect people were to be redeemed, sanctified, and fitted for glory. Christ no longer, as once on earth, carries forward by His visible presence and power this great and mysterious work; He is no longer to be seen and heard in the midst of us. But He has left behind Him an agency, of an enduring and effectual kind, for the accomplishment of His purpose of grace; and the work of conversion and sanctification and preparation for heaven is still going on, and will continue to do so, until the number of the elect shall be completed, and there shall remain none else to gather from a world of sin to a world of everlasting blessedness. Had He Himself remained on earth, His own right arm might have wrought this salvation, and the power of His abiding presence might have ensured success. But it was expedient for the disciples that Christ should go away. He has gone away. And now, in His absence from the world, where shall we look for that powerful and mysterious agency which shall do the work of Christ in His absence, and carry forward and complete that mighty plan, on which His heart is set, for the regeneration and recovery of His lost and banished ones? In answer to that question, the Scriptures tell us that there is a twofold agency to which Christ

has entrusted this task. First, there is His Spirit; and, secondly, there is His Church.

When it became expedient that the *Second* Person of the blessed Godhead should depart and return to the Father, His place on earth was taken and His departure supplied by the coming of the *Third* Person in His stead. The Spirit was the gift of the Son to this world, when He Himself could no longer tarry here, but must hasten unto the Father in heaven; and the promise was given, that the habitation of the Spirit with men should not, like His own, be one merely temporary and short-lived, but that it was destined to be uninterrupted and permanent. First in place and in importance, the agency of the Spirit is the grand means appointed by Christ for carrying forward that work of spiritual recovery and redemption among men, which He Himself, when on earth, had only begun.

But, second and subordinate to the Spirit of God, the Church, with its rich provision of Word and ordinance, is another instrument in the hand of Christ for carrying forward and accomplishing His purpose of grace on the earth. To that Church, in like manner as in regard to the Spirit, there is given the promise that it shall endure for ever on the earth, until the work of gathering and perfecting Christ's people shall have been completed. These are Christ's two instruments in the world, of standing and effectual might, for working out His great work in the conversion and sanctification of His people,—the one an inward and unseen power, and the other an outward and visible agency; but both combining to carry forward, without failure and without ceasing, the mighty and mysterious task entrusted to them. Although no longer seen in the midst of us urging forward, through means of His visible presence and power, the plan of grace, Christ still worketh hitherto, and will work, through the twofold agency of His Spirit and of His Church.

It is deeply interesting, then, to inquire into the place and office assigned to the Church of Christ in the world. What is the peculiar and important work given to the Christian Church to do upon earth? What is the place assigned to it in the economy of grace that Christ is now carrying forward? What are its relations and office as regards the world in which it is established and upheld? It is a Divine institution, while all others around it are human. It is a city whose builder and

maker is God, while all other societies have been created by man. And the Christian society, thus founded and maintained by God in the midst of a world, where all around it is human and earthly, must have been established for no trivial or ordinary end. What, then, I ask, is the mission of the Church on the earth, and its office in relation to the world? There are three separate considerations, the statement of which may serve to indicate and explain the office of the Christian Church in reference to the world, and at the same time will bring out the erroneous views entertained by various parties in regard to this point.

I. In the first place, the Christian Church, in reference to the world in which it is found, is designed and fitted to be a witness for Christ, and not a substitute for Christ.

At the mouth of two witnesses, at the least, is a testimony for Christ declared and confirmed to the world. That Spirit which He left behind Him on the earth is ever witnessing to the hearts and consciences of men on behalf of a Saviour. Unseen, but not unfelt, the Holy Ghost is always testifying to the souls of men in favour of Christ, both in His ordinary and His peculiar operations on the understanding and the conscience,—leaving a witness with them, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear,—whether they reject the testimony and continue in their unbelief, or receive it and turn unto a Saviour. This is the unseen and inward witness for Christ on the earth, that can never be silenced or superseded. But there was needed a visible and outward witness also, to join in the testimony and to confirm its words; and, over and above the Spirit of God in the heart, there is the Church of God appealing to the outward ear and eye, and lifting up a public testimony, seen and known of all men. By the Word of Christ, which it declares in the hearing of all, by the ordinances of Christ, which it administers in His name, by the authority of Christ, which it exercises in subordination to His appointment, the Church is intended and adapted to be a standing and outward witness on behalf of Christ on the earth.

It requires no lengthened illustration to show by what wise and gracious arrangements the Christian society has been fitted to accomplish this grand end of its appointment. Is it the Word of Christ that is proclaimed aloud in the hearing of the world by means of the Church, as a teacher and minister of Divine truth? That Word testifies of Christ; and when its sound is heard

through all the earth, and its accents unto the end of the world, it is but the standing and unceasing testimony of the Church in every age to the glory of Christ's character, and the preciousness of His grace. Is it the ordinances of Christ that are dispensed by the Church before the eyes of the world,—those outward signs and inward seals which it has been given to the Church to administer to her members? Those ordinances, in their main and primary character, are a public testimony for Christ. The washing of Baptism in His name declares the sprinkling of His blood and the renewal of His Spirit; and the ordinance of a Communion Table openly and emphatically proclaims the virtue of His dying and the glory of His Cross. Those ordinances are the speaking and emphatic testimony of the Church, lifted up from age to age in the hearing of the world in behalf of its Head. Is it the authority of Christ that is administered in the way of government and discipline within His own house? Then that authority, when wielded in His name, speaks directly of Christ, and forms part of that testimony which the Church is continually bearing on the earth to the presence and the claims of her Head. In making the Church the depositary among men of that Word which He at first inspired, and still continues to bless, and of those ordinances which He originally appointed, and still vouchsafes to sanctify to the good of His people, Christ has established on the earth an outward and visible witness to Himself, of an enduring and perpetual kind, the utterances of which, in the hearing of the world, can neither be lost nor nullified. On the one hand, the testimony of the Church on behalf of Christ may be disregarded or rejected, and men may continue in their unbelief; but its voice, if not heard to save, is sufficiently heard to justify the condemnation of those who have disbelieved it. On the other hand, those who have been led by it to turn to a Saviour, and have received the testimony that it bears to Him, become, in a manner more emphatic still, the living evidences that the witness of the Church is both real and true. In either case the Church is, along with the Spirit, the standing and perpetual witness on the earth on behalf of a Saviour.

The Christian Church, in reference to this world, is fitted to be a *witness;* it is neither designed nor adapted to be a *substitute* for Christ. And yet this is the very place and character assigned

to the Church by the Popish doctrine regarding it. With Romanists, the Church is not the witness on this earth, silently by its public ordinances, or articulately by its preached Word, pointing upward to Christ, avowing its own insufficiency and dependence, and bearing testimony to His power and grace. It is not the witness to Christ, no longer present on the earth, but ascended to heaven,—it is the substitute for Christ in His absence, usurping His place among men, and arrogating His powers. "The visible Church," says one of the ablest and most learned defenders of the Popish system in modern times,—"the visible Church is the Son of God Himself everlastingly manifesting Himself among men in a human form, perpetually renovated and eternally young,—the permanent Incarnation of the same; as in Holy Writ even the faithful are called the body of Christ." "The Church is the body of the Lord; it is, in its universality, His visible form,—His permanent, ever-renovated humanity, His eternal revelation."[1]

According to this system, the Church of Christ on earth embodies in itself all the powers and offices which once belonged to Christ incarnate; and its mission in regard to the world is to administer those powers and discharge those offices, as the only vicar or substitute for an absent Lord. This is very different indeed from being the witness to Christ, pointing upward continually to Him, in acknowledgment at once of *its* own dependence and of *His* ever present and prevailing power. Was Christ Himself when on earth the teacher of His people, revealing to them the Word and wisdom of the Father, and instructing them in all

[1] Möhler, *Symbolism*, vol. ii. pp. 5, 35. ["So ist denn die sichtbare Kirche der unter den Menschen in menschlicher Form fortwährend erscheinende, stets sich erneuernde, ewig sich verjüngende Sohn Gottes, die andauernde Fleischwerdung desselben, so wie denn auch die Glaubigen in der heiligen Schrift der Leib Christi genannt werden." "Die Kirche ist der Leib des Herrn, sie ist in ihrer Gesammtheit seine sichtbare Gestalt, seine bleibende, ewig sich verjüngende Menschheit, seine ewige Offenbarung."—*Symbolik*, 6te Ausg. pp. 332, 333, 356. It is well known that Möhler, like Dr. Döllinger of Munich, and several others of the ablest of modern Roman Catholic theologians, was looked upon with considerable suspicion and disfavour at Rome, in consequence of his philosophic remodellings of the old doctrines of the Church. Among other points, this theory of the perpetual Incarnation of Christ in the Church has been objected to even by Romanists, as too much akin to some systems of German Pantheism. Perrone, however, undertakes to defend Möhler's statements, if only not taken too literally: "Dummodo hæc rite intelligantur, prout natura similitudinum exigit, quæ ad vivum resecari non debent."—Perrone, *Prælect. Theolog.* tom. ii. pp. 707, 708.]

saving and infallible truth? In Christ's absence now, the Church, according to the Popish theory, is His substitute,—the unerring teacher, qualified and sufficient for the same work, and having in itself the power and gift by its traditions to declare, and by its unerring authority to interpret infallibly, the will of God unto His people. Was Christ Himself when on earth the fountain of supernatural grace, communicating to the weary and heavy-laden sinner forgiveness of sin and the purification and renewal of the Spirit? In Christ's absence the Church is the fountain of that same grace now, conveying through its ministers and its Sacraments the absolution from sin, and the cleansing and sanctification of the sinner. Was Christ Himself while on earth the visible Head of the Christian society, exercising authority and administering rule? The same authority and rule, in His absence, now belongs to the Church itself, as supreme and infallible in all matters of faith and government and administration. In short, the Church is not the witness for Christ, but the substitute for Him on the earth, sitting in His seat of authority and power, qualified and commissioned to exercise, on behalf of men, all His offices as Mediator, and to be at once and equally the Prophet, the Priest, and the King in the visible kingdom of believers. Such, in substance, is the Popish view of the Church in its relations to the world,—a system which holds out before the eyes of men the Church on this earth as standing in the stead of Christ, and exercising all the powers and offices of Christ on their behalf.[1]

It is hardly needful to say that there is in the Word of God, not only no ground for such a system as this, but that it is directly opposed to its pretensions and claims. The Lord Jesus Christ, although absent in the body, has not resigned or delegated to any mortal substitute His office and work as Mediator. The mode of administration, since He has departed from this world and ascended up on high, may be changed, but the administration itself is still in His hands. He is still the sole King and Head of His Church. The Church itself may be the witness on earth to

[1] ["Item fit ut Ecclesia una sit, prout unus est Christus, sancta uti sanctus est Christus, indefectibilis quemadmodum indefectibilis est Christus, infallibilis sicut infallibilis est Christus, qui eam tanquam vivam imaginem Sui Ipsius atque perfectam esse voluit, imo per eam quodammodo Se in his terris usque ad consummationem seculi perpetuare constituit, ita ut quod Christus habuit et habet natura Sua communicet per gratiam ac privilegium huic Filiæ seu Sponsæ Suæ."—Perrone, *Prælect. Theolog.* tom. ii. p. 708.]

Christ in heaven, but has not been permitted to usurp His place, or to arrogate His peculiar authority and incommunicable powers.[1]

This great truth, that the Church of Christ is fitted and designed to be a witness for Christ in the world, is subverted not only by the Popish system, which makes the Church to be not a witness but a substitute for its Head, but also by those systems which would make the Christian society one of mere human origin or arrangement. If the Church is not an institution established and upheld by Christ, but merely the creature of man in one shape or other, then the conclusion is inevitable, that it ceases in any sense to be a witness for Christ, and becomes merely a witness for man. Concede to the advocates of such a theory, that the Christian Church is merely a voluntary association, gathered together on the same principles and for similar ends as any other human society, and you at once silence its testimony for Christ, and you no longer see it pointing upward to heaven. Or admit the same general doctrine in another shape, and confess that the Christian Church is the mere creature of the civil power, owing its existence and character and prerogatives as a Church to the state, and you no less deprive it of its character as a witness on earth for its Divine Head, and make it speak, if it speaks at all, of the wisdom and power of man, and of these alone, in its existence and arrangements. If the Christian Church is to occupy the place and fulfil the commission assigned to it as a standing and perpetual witness for Christ on the earth, it must be able to evince unequivocally, that it owes its origin, its character, its authority, and its power to Christ alone; and in so far as these are in any respect interfered with by human enactments, to that extent there is a silencing of the testimony that the Church bears to its exalted Head. The Popish system tends to make the Church not a witness, but a substitute for Christ on earth; the Erastian system tends to make the Church not a witness for Christ, but a witness for man.[2]

II. In the second place, the Christian Church in the world is an outward ordinance of God, fitted and designed to be the instrument of the Spirit, but not the substitute for the Spirit.

[1] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. i. pp. 54, 55; vol. ii. pp. 28–35. Garbett, *Bampton Lecture*, 1842, vol. i. pp. 35, 59–61.]

[2] [Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. ii. chap. v. pp. 90–96. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 397–412.]

The external provision which God has made in the Church in the way of Word and Sacrament and government, for the purpose of promoting the edification and advantage of its members, viewed *merely* as an external provision, is fraught with manifold and important benefits, apart altogether from those of a supernatural and saving kind. That provision is *naturally*, and apart from the extraordinary ministration of the Spirit of God, fitted to work out the advantage of the Christian society; but, unquestionably, the grand and distinctive advantage of such an outward provision is the fact, that with that provision is mysteriously linked the power and presence of the Third Person of the Godhead, and that with Word and Sacrament and discipline in the Church stands connected the influence of the Holy Ghost. The outward provision of teaching and ordinance and administration in the Christian society, is the ordinary and accustomed channel through which the deep and mysterious tide of Divine and supernatural power flows to the members from God. The ministry of the Word, viewed merely as human teaching, has a natural influence on the understanding, in the way of instruction and improvement; but along with that natural influence of knowledge or persuasion on the mind, and over and above it, there is the supernatural influence of the Spirit of God, making the reading and preaching of the Word a Divine power to enlighten and inform and convince. The Sacraments of the Church, merely as speaking and teaching signs, may undoubtedly be affirmed to be adapted to the spiritual nature of man, so as to exercise naturally a moral influence over his feelings and his heart; but beyond that moral influence, and altogether above the ministry of natural means, there is a supernatural grace imparted by the Spirit, making Sacraments not only signs, but seals of saving blessings to those who rightly partake of them. The authority of the Church, regarded merely as an external authority, is unquestionably adapted to exercise a beneficial control over its members in the regulation of their conduct and life; but far beyond and surpassing this, is that supernatural control and power of the Spirit, which binds the conscience with a sense of obligation, and constrains obedience as a duty done to God. The outward and formal ordinance of Word and Sacrament and authority in the Church is linked with the mysterious and supernatural influence of the

Holy Ghost; and the Church becomes a living and spiritual power in the soul, as the instrument of the Spirit of God in His dealings with our spirits.

Why God has been pleased thus to conjoin the natural influence of outward ordinances with the supernatural influence of His Spirit, and why, over and above all that reason can discern in the natural provision of the Church, as suitable to the spiritual advantage of man, there is a virtue which reason cannot explain, we may be utterly unable to understand. But without being able to explain it, we are assured of the fact, that to those who use them after a spiritual manner there is a supernatural grace to be experienced through ordinances, which is not elsewhere to be found, and that this virtue resides not in themselves, or in their natural adaptation to man's understanding and heart, but in the supernatural presence within them of the Holy Ghost. The outward provision of the visible Church of Christ is mysteriously impregnated with Divine grace. The Church itself is, in an especial and supernatural manner, the residence of the Holy Ghost; and in the right and faithful use of its ordinances the spirit of man meets with the Spirit of God, and finds a blessing beyond the reach of ordinances.

But if the visible Church in the world is an outward ordinance fitted to be the instrument of the Spirit, it is not a substitute for the Spirit. At this point, once more, we come into conflict with the Popish system of the Church, as exhibited in some of its deadliest errors. The doctrine of the "opus operatum"—or the efficacy of ordinances and Sacraments in themselves, and as mere external appointments in the Church, apart from the spiritual state and faith of those who make use of them—is characteristic of the Romish theory of the Church, and goes, in point of fact, to make the Church, as an institute for the spiritual advantage of its members, not the instrument of the Spirit of God, but the substitute for the Spirit of God. According to this system, the doctrine, that the Spirit is the immediate source of all life and virtue to ordinances, in the case of those who spiritually employ them, is superseded or denied; and the ordinances of the Church are made mere charms, working in themselves —and without regard to the state or character of the partakers —that work of grace which the Spirit alone accomplishes upon believers. Is it the ordinance of the Word that is inquired

about, and do you ask what is the virtue of that ordinance as exhibited or asserted in the teaching of the Church of Rome? It is not the virtue or power of the Spirit of God. The power and the virtue of the ordinance, according to the Romish system, are manifested and exhausted when the infallible teaching of the Church is followed by the formal submission and implicit surrender of the understanding to its dictates, and when, *ex opere operato*, an outward uniformity of profession as to articles of faith is secured,—apart altogether from that intelligent understanding and reasonable conviction of the truth of the dogmas, which even the natural man can render, and still more apart from that spiritual discernment and saving belief in them, which none but the Spirit of God can impart. Is it the Sacraments of the Church that are inquired after, and do you ask what is their power according to the theory or practice of the Church of Rome? Here, too, it may be answered, that it is not the power of the Spirit of God. The grace communicated to the participators is a grace that resides in the outward ordinance, and not in the Spirit of God, communicated through the channel of outward ordinances to the soul of the believer who rightly employs them; and it is to be enjoyed in consequence of the outward observance, independent altogether of that meeting and communion of the believer with his God, without which outward observances are the signs, but not the seals, of supernatural grace. Is it the authority of the Church that is inquired after, and do you ask what influence has such an outward authority according to the system of Romanists? Once more I reply, that it is not the influence of the Spirit subduing and bending the whole man, binding the conscience, and constraining it as a willing servant in the day of Divine power. It is an outward and formal submission to the supreme authority of the Church,—altogether apart from that surrender of conscience and will, affection and life, as a voluntary sacrifice to Divine authority, which Divine grace alone, in the case of any man, can effect. According to the theory and practice of the Popish system, the Church, with its outward provision of Word and Sacrament and authority, is not an instrument for the Spirit of God to employ, but a substitute by which the Spirit of God is superseded and set aside.

III. In the third place, the Christian Church in the world is fitted and designed to serve as a means for effecting the com-

munion of Christians with each other,—not to be a substitute for the communion of Christians with their Saviour.

It cannot be doubted, that one of the great ends to be accomplished by the establishment of a Christian Church on earth was the union of the disciples into one fellowship, and the substitution of a social for an individual Christianity. Not that the individual Christianity of the believer was to be superseded or set aside as subordinate to the social, but rather that it was to be developed and expanded by means of union and intercourse with his fellow-believers. There is something in the very nature of man that makes union and fellowship with other men essentially necessary to develop the whole faculties and powers of his being; and this characteristic of man's nature has been taken advantage of in the economy of grace; so that, under the power of association, believers are not merely or only units in the dispensation of God, but brethren also in the enjoyment of communion with each other collectively, as well as in the enjoyment of communion individually, each one with his Saviour. According to the arrangement of God, the Christian is more of a Christian in society than alone, and more in the enjoyment of privileges of a spiritual kind when he shares them with others, than when he possesses them apart. There is an added blessing on the fellowship of believing men, which they cannot experience except in fellowship with each other; and within the bosom and communion of the Christian society there is an enlargement and augmentation of privileges, not to be enjoyed apart from it. Such, for example, is the blessing promised to "two or three" when "gathered together in the name of Christ," over and above what is promised to the solitary worshipper; and such is the more abundant and gracious answer that will be returned to prayer, when men, even a few, "shall agree together to ask anything of God," rather than when they ask separately and alone. The Christian Church was established in the world, to realize the superior advantages of a social over an individual Christianity, and to set up and maintain the communion of saints. In his union to Christ the Head, the individual believer becomes ingrafted into the same body, and partakes of the same privileges with other believers. He is one with them in the same Spirit, in the same faith, in the same baptism, in the same hopes, in the same grace, in the same salvation. The bonds of that spiritual union go to strengthen his own individual

Christianity, the sympathy of it to call forth his own individual affections, and the incitement of it to enlarge his own personal faith and hope; so that, in the fellowship of the Church, and within the magic circle of its influences, the believer is in a more eminent sense a believer, than apart from them. One of the grand offices which the Christian Church has to discharge in the world is thus to be the centre and home of union to believing men, and to become a sanctuary, within the holy fellowship of which Christians may meet, and enjoy in common their spiritual privileges, and find that those privileges are doubled, because shared in common.

But the Christian Church, although fitted and intended to effect a communion of Christians with each other, was not intended to be a substitute for the communion of Christians with their Saviour. Here, once more, we come into collision with the system of the Romish Church. According to that system, the only possible union to a Saviour is the union to a visible Church; and a sinner becomes grafted into Christ only and solely by being first grafted into the outward community of Christians. "The individual worshipper of Christ," says the same modern expounder of the Romish system already quoted,—"the individual worshipper of Christ is incorporated into the Church by indissoluble bonds, and is by the same conducted unto the Saviour, and abideth in Him only in so far as he abideth in the Church." "The fellowship with Christ is accordingly the fellowship with His community,—the internal union with Him, a communion with His Church."[1] According to this theory, the union of a man with the outward and visible Church is a substitute for His spiritual union to the Saviour. The Church must stand to the sinner in place of Christ. It is almost needless to say that there cannot possibly be a doctrine more directly opposed both to the letter and the spirit of the Gospel. If ever a sinner is to find relief from the burden of sin and the anxieties of a guilty conscience, it is when alone, as if there were no other sinner in the world but himself, with neither Sacrament, nor priest, nor Church between, he goes directly to the Saviour, and face to face deals with Christ for his soul, and seeks rest in Him. In direct and immediate union with Christ, through His Spirit, are life and pardon to be found. The Christian Church on earth was de-

[1] Möhler, *Symbolism*, Robertson's Transl. vol. ii. p. 10.

signed and fitted to be the home where Christian might meet with Christian, and hold fellowship together; it was neither designed nor fitted to be a substitute for the union and fellowship of the sinner with his Saviour.[1]

[1] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 6–34; Hodge, *Essays and Reviews*, art. vi. Theories of the Church, pp. 201–220; Nitzsch, *System der christl. Lehre*, §§ 185, 186, 191; *Protest. Beant.* pp. 207, 222–224.]

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO THE STATE.

IN the course of our former discussions we have been led to assert the existence of a society different from any other that is known on earth, claiming in its origin to be from God, professing in its character to be spiritual, and established among men for the purpose of carrying forward the great ends of the Gospel dispensation towards this world. This is the Church of Christ. But we know, both from history and the Word of God, that there exists another society on earth, of a different nature, and with different aims, claiming also to be of God, having a character not spiritual but secular, and established for the purpose of promoting, at least in the first instance, the temporal and social well-being of men. This is the body politic, or the state. The Church of Christ, or the visible community of professing Christians on earth, is a body corporate, having, in its collective character, or in its separate sections, a certain order, government, and administration appointed to it, for the purpose mainly and primarily of advancing the spiritual wellbeing of the members of the Christian society, although not without reference to the temporal interests of the community. The state is a body corporate also, composed of the members of the civil society, having a certain authority and power and constitution appointed to it, evidently for the purpose, in the first instance, of advancing the temporal interests of the community, although not without reference indirectly to the higher advantage of its members.

These two societies, both of them claiming a Divine origin and sanction, and aiming chiefly at separate objects through a separate instrumentality, co-exist in this world, and are found side by side among men. Wherever the Gospel has been preached and the faith of the Gospel professed, a new element

has thereby been introduced, in addition to the civil order and constitution of society previously established. Over and above the civil state, which in one shape or other is found to exist in all organized societies of men, and without which society itself could not exist, we have the outward and visible society of the Christian Church, oftentimes composed of the same members, and at all events established within the same community. And the question arises: What are the relations of these two societies to each other; upon what terms are they fitted by their constitution or character to stand in reference to each other; and in what respects are they calculated to hinder or to help each other's aims and objects? This is an inquiry of the deepest interest and importance, as directly affecting the office and standing of both institutions. The Church and the state have each a separate existence and a joint place in the world. Wherever Christianity is professed among men, there they must be found together, asserting their different objects and claims. We cannot have Christian association among men without a Church; and we cannot have civil association among men without a political government in one shape or other, and under one name or other. The inquiry, therefore, is forced upon us at the very outset: How do these two corporate societies stand to each other; and in what respects are they fitted to exist in harmony or to act in connection? Are there grounds for asserting that there is no basis to be found on which these two separate yet co-existing powers may meet and co-operate; and are they to be accounted fundamentally heterogeneous, or even hostile? Or is there a groundwork laid in the nature and functions of the two societies for an amicable alliance and harmonious co-operation between them, without confounding the two, or making the one subordinate to or dependent on the other? These questions open up a very wide field, which it is impossible for us at present fully to traverse. They stir controversies which we can hardly afford even to enter upon. All that we can do is rather to indicate the ground on which the matter may be argued than to give the argument itself, and to point out the heads of reasoning instead of unfolding the reasoning in detail.

The subject of the relation of Church and state naturally divides itself into two parts in connection with the answers given to two questions, which meet us at the outset of the discussion.

I. In the first place, are the two societies, co-existing in this world under the names of Church and State, really and essentially different and independent, or are they fundamentally *one*, and only manifested under different forms, and subsisting under different modifications? Is it possible to identify them with each other in their essential nature, so that the Church may ultimately be resolved into the state, or the state into the Church,—the one forming a part and parcel of the other, or the one being a subordinate member or inferior department of the other? This is the first question that demands an answer in investigating the relations of the Church to the state; and here it will be necessary to make manifest the fundamental difference and the essential independence of the two societies, and the impossibility of resolving them into one, or of making the one dependent on the other. In dealing with this point we shall be brought into conflict with the two forms in which the principle now stated is denied,—namely, the Erastian theory, which makes the Church subordinate to the state, and the Romish theory, which makes the state subordinate to the Church.

II. In the second place, if the Church and the state are essentially different, and rightfully independent of each other, are there any grounds on which it is possible that an alliance can be formed between the two, without sacrificing on the one side or other their independent character or public functions, and on which it may be their duty to act in concert for the promotion of certain common ends? This is the second question that meets us in inquiring into the relation in which the Christian society stands to the civil government; and, in connection with it, it will be necessary to show that there is a common ground on which, in consistency with their separate character and independent offices, it is both possible and right for the Church and state to meet in an amicable alliance, and for the purpose of friendly co-operation. Under this division of the subject we shall be brought into collision with the Voluntary theory, which denies the position now laid down.

SEC. I. ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION AND MUTUAL INDEPENDENCE OF CHURCH AND STATE.

That the Christian Church and the civil state are essentially different, and rightfully independent the one of the other, may be satisfactorily demonstrated from various considerations.

First, the state and the Church are essentially different in regard to their origin.

The state, or the ordinance of civil government, owes its origin to God as the universal Sovereign and Ruler among the nations. The Church, as the visible society of professing Christians in the world, with its outward provision of authority and order and government, owes its origin to Christ as Mediator. This difference is a most important one, as it involves and implies other differences characteristic of the two bodies. The civil government is an ordinance of God, founded not in grace, but in nature, and therefore intended for human society as subsisting in all nations, whether Christian or not, and carrying with it the authority and sanction of a Divine appointment wherever human society is found. As an appointment of God, in His character of universal Sovereign, the authority of the state, and the duty of subjects in regard to it, are entirely independent of the Christianity of rulers or subjects; and the rights and responsibilities of the two parties are as valid and as binding in heathen as in Christian lands. On the other hand, the Church, as an ordinance of Christ, is founded in grace, not in nature, and is limited to those nations where Christianity is actually professed. As an appointment of the Mediator, in His character of special Ruler or Head over His own people, it carries with it His authority, and is restricted in its jurisdiction to those who profess their subjection to Him, and join themselves to the Christian society which He has established. Different in their origin, and in the source from which they derive their authority, the state and the Church are thus based on distinct and separate foundations, and are entirely independent of each other. Nor is this fundamental difference cancelled or overruled by the fact that the state or civil government is now put under the dominion of Christ in the character of Mediator, as well as the Church. It is true that the civil governments of the world, like everything else, are subordi-

nated to the Redeemer, that He may make use of them for promoting His own mediatorial purposes, and that Christ is not only "Head of the Church," but "Head over all things to the Church."[1] But this authority of Christ over the civil governments of the earth is a thing superinduced upon their original character as the ordinance of God, in His capacity of universal Sovereign. It does not in the least affect or supersede that character. The state, although it is now delegated to Christ to be under His authority for the good of His Church, has not ceased to be what it originally was—an appointment of God as the God of nature—any more than the creation of God has ceased to be the creation of God, because it also is now subordinated to the dominion of Christ for the interests of His people. In their origin, and in the basis on which they rest, the civil society and the Christian society are two ordinances essentially independent and distinct.

In the second place, the state and the Church are essentially distinct in regard to the primary objects for which they were instituted.

The state, or civil government, has been ordained by God for the purpose of promoting and securing, as its primary object, the outward order and good of human society; and that object it is its mission to accomplish wherever it is found, — whether in Christian or heathen lands. Without civil order or government, in some shape or other, human society could not exist at all; and as the ordinance of God for all, its direct and immediate aim is to aid the cause of humanity as such, without limitation or restriction to humanity as christianized. On the other hand, the Church of Christ has been instituted by Him for the purpose of advancing and upholding the work of grace on the earth, being limited, in its primary object, to promoting the spiritual interests of the Christian community among which it is found. No doubt there are secondary objects, which both civil government on the one hand, and the Church on the other, are fitted and intended to subserve, in addition to those of a primary kind. The state, as the ordinance of God, can never be absolved from its allegiance to Him, and can never be exempted from the duty of seeking to advance His glory and to promote His purposes of grace on the earth. And in like manner the Church, in addition to the objects of a spiritual kind which it seeks to accomplish, may be adapted, and *is* adapted, to further the mere temporal and social wellbeing

[1] Eph. i. 22, v. 23; Col. i. 16–18, ii. 10.

of society. But still the grand distinction cannot be overlooked, that marks out the primary objects of the Church and state respectively as separate, and not to be confounded. They are instituted for widely different ends. The one, as founded in nature, was meant primarily to subserve the temporal good of mankind; the other, as founded in grace, was designed primarily to advance their spiritual wellbeing. They may indirectly, and as a secondary duty, fulfil certain ends common to both; they may concur in contemplating certain objects together; but as they differ in their origin, so also they differ entirely in the primary and immediate purpose for which they are respectively established on the earth.

Thirdly, the state and the Church are essentially distinct and independent in regard to the power which is committed to them respectively by God.

Civil government has been ordained by God mainly for the purpose of securing the peace and the rights of civil society; and for this end the administration of it implies a power of coercion fitted to protect the well-disposed in the enjoyment of their privileges, and able both to punish and repress the evil-doers in the wrongs that they commit. To the civil government belongs the power of the sword, as the instrumentality adapted to its purposes. But the Church of Christ, having been established, not to prevent or redress human violence and civil wrong, but rather to promote the grand purposes of God's grace towards a fallen world, is armed with no such coercive power. Its weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. The power which Christ has vested in His Church is one that does not imply the exercise of force, but is concerned only with the understandings and convictions of men. To the Church Christ has given the power of the Spirit, the force of truth, the might of saving grace, the influence of spiritual authority; and in the administration of that power, through means of the ministry of the Word and the dispensation of ordinances, the Christian society claims no right over the persons and properties, but only appeals to the hearts and consciences of men. This fundamental distinction between the kinds of power wielded by the Church and the state respectively, draws a broad line of demarcation between the two societies, as essentially separate and independent. From the very nature of the state it cannot, without departing from its proper place, usurp the office or assume the jurisdiction of the Church,

because it has received no authority to perform, and is not competent to exercise, spiritual functions; and, on the other hand, the Church has no power to assume to itself the powers and prerogatives of the civil magistrate, because those powers and prerogatives, being civil and coercive, are wholly alien to its character and jurisdiction. In the employment of civil authority, with respect to the rights and lives of its subjects, the state is fenced round with the sanction of God, the supreme and universal Sovereign; it holdeth not the sword in vain; and its legitimate power, in the execution of punishment, reaches to the confiscation of property or the infliction of death. In the use of spiritual authority, as regards the understandings or consciences of men, the Church, in like manner, is fenced round by the sanction of God,—that authority implies a right to use instruction, admonition, reproof, censure, in the case of those who offend; but when those means are used, and used in vain, the power of the Church is exhausted in regard to the offender, and its office of authority is at an end. The rights that belong to the one society are rights that cannot be interchanged with or belong to the other: in their power and office the two are entirely distinct and independent.

Fourthly, the state and the Church are essentially distinct and independent in regard to the administration of their respective authorities.

The Word of God has not enjoined the form of civil government to be adopted, or the particular officers through whom its authority is to be administered; it has sanctioned neither a despotism nor a democracy, as such. But under whatever form civil government may be found, as adapted differently to the character or wishes of different nations, it is an ordinance of God; and the appointed organs of government, whoever they may be, bear with them His authority "for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise and protection of such as do well." The civil magistrate, as the organ of the state, is fenced about with a Divine warrant when, in the lawful exercise of his office, he lays his hand upon the property and life of man.

The office of civil magistracy is appropriate to the civil society, and is vested with its awful and mysterious power, in consequence of its being the ordinance of Him who is the sovereign Lord of man's property and life. But there are offices

appropriate to the spiritual society also, and, in consequence, vested with its peculiar authority, to be exercised in the name and under the appointment of Christ. It is not necessary at present to enter into the question of who, according to the Word of God, are the persons selected to be the magistrates of the Church, or who, in consequence of His appointment, are warranted to wield the authority of Christ within His house. This question will come up for discussion at a subsequent stage in our investigations. It is enough for us, in the meantime, to know the general fact, which lies on the very surface of the New Testament, that the Christian Church has persons appointed to rule and exercise authority within it; being, like every other organized association, made up of two classes,—the governors and the governed. In other words, it belongs to the Christian Church to have its office-bearers as well as its members,—those office-bearers being the organs of the society to exercise a certain kind of authority over the rest, and being fenced about with a Divine sanction in the rightful discharge of the duties pertaining to them. In their hands the order and government of the Church are vested; and the office that they hold, as well as the authority that they administer, are derived from the ordinance and appointment of Christ.

Now, in the separation thus established between the two societies of the Church and state, in respect not only to the kind of power committed to them, but also to its administration, we see the clear and unquestionable evidence, that they are designed to be distinct and independent the one of the other. They have a separate jurisdiction; they have separate organs and office-bearers to exercise it. There is a magistracy that appertains to the state,—the appointment and ordinance of God to exercise the functions which God has intrusted to the state. There is a different magistracy that appertains to the Church,—the appointment and ordinance of Christ to discharge the duties which Christ has intrusted to the Church. The two are wholly apart from each other, and cannot interchange office or authority or duty. Each magistracy is peculiar and appropriate to the province within which it bears rule. The office-bearers of the state are not known within the Church; and, on the other hand, the office bearers of the Church are not known within the state. In their respective authorities, and in the administration of that authority,

the state and the Church are different from and independent of each other.

Upon these four grounds, then, there may be laid the foundation of a proof clear and abundant: that these two institutions, the Church and the state, equally of Divine appointment, have a separate existence, a distinct character, and an independent authority; and that it is impossible to identify them, or to make the one dependent upon the other.[1] These principles may be applied in a twofold way.

In the first place, they may serve to expose the fallacy of the Erastian system, which seeks to subordinate the Church to the civil government.

It was the doctrine of Erastus, as laid down in his *Theses touching Excommunication*, that the general government of the visible Church is part of the one function of dominion intrusted to the state; that the office-bearers in the Christian society, as such, are merely instructors, or preachers of the Word, without any power or right to rule, except what they derive from the civil magistrate; and that ecclesiastical censure, and more especially excommunication, is a civil punishment, which the magistrate may employ the office-bearers of the Church to inflict, but which owes its force to civil authority alone. The principles of Erastus were more fully developed in after times by those who adopted his views,—more especially in Holland; and they are sufficiently recognised now as that system of opinion which in any shape ascribes to the civil magistrate a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things or ecclesiastical matters. Such a system cannot be consistently maintained, except by those who to a large extent overlook or set aside the fundamental distinction between the Church and state, as societies wholly separate and independent, and who, in one way or other, are disposed to confound or identify the two. In this way the Erastian theory is opposed more or less to all those principles already indicated, as furnishing, with their appropriate evidence, a satisfactory proof that the Church and state are distinct and independent in their origin, in their primary objects, in the power exercised by them, and in the administration of that power. It is more especially opposed, however, to the third and fourth of the positions already laid down.

[1] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 196–210. *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part ii. chap. ix. sec. ii. Apollonius, *Jus Majestatis circa Sacra*, cap. ii. pp. 25–28; cap. iii. pp. 50–58; Pars ii. sec. ii. cap. i. pp. 283–318.]

If it be true that the nature of the power appertaining to the state is wholly different from the nature of the power intrusted to the Church,—the one being coercive and civil, and the other purely spiritual,—then it would seem undeniably to follow, that the province and jurisdiction of the one are fundamentally distinct from those of the other; and that, so far from subordinating the Church to his own authority, the civil magistrate cannot lawfully trespass into a region where he has no jurisdiction, and the Church alone has. Again, and still further, if it be true that Christ has appointed in His Church not only a power distinct from that of the civil magistrate, but an administration of that power equally distinct,—if He has given to the Church not merely an authority separate from that of the state, but office-bearers to administer that authority distinct also,—then there would seem to be in this an additional security against the encroachments of the one upon the province of the other, and an additional reason for asserting, in opposition to the Erastian doctrine, that the Christian society can never, in any circumstances, be merged into the civil, nor the kingdom of Christ be made the slave of the kingdoms of men.

The principles already laid down serve to evince very clearly also the fallacy of the argument which is perhaps most often employed to justify the encroachments of the state on the spiritual independence of the Christian Church. Erastians are accustomed to contend, that it is inconsistent with the very idea of civil society to permit another and an independent society within it. They assert that the claim of the Church involves the setting up of an "imperium in imperio," and that the state cannot stand if another body is to exercise a separate and not subordinate jurisdiction within the very bosom of the commonwealth. Now, the third principle enunciated by us, as marking the fundamental difference between the Church and state, is quite sufficient to remove the apparent plausibility of this objection. If the Church and state wielded power of the same kind, and exercised jurisdiction to the same intent, there might be, and very possibly would be, collision and contradiction between them, inconsistent with the co-ordinate authority or existence of both. If both exercised a separate and independent control over the persons and properties of men, or both claimed an equal and distinct authority over the conscience,—if, in short, both wielded a power either exclusively temporal or exclusively spiritual,—the Church and the state

could not exist in the same country, without endangering the peace and harmony of the community. But if, as we have already seen, the nature of the authority exercised by each be wholly and fundamentally unlike,—if the one claims jurisdiction in temporal and the other in spiritual matters,—they may exist together, and embrace as members the very same individuals, without provoking any collision, or requiring that, for the sake of harmony, the one should be made subordinate to the other. In the fundamental distinction between the province assigned to each, we see provision made not only against the risk of collision, but for a friendly and harmonious co-operation.[1]

In the second place, the principles already laid down serve no less to evince the fallacy of the Popish system, which would subordinate the civil power to the spiritual.

The supremacy of the spiritual authority over the civil, and the title belonging to the Church to dispose of the temporal rights and property of men, are doctrines put forth in the broadest and most offensive form by the Church of Rome, in the Fourth Council of Lateran, accounted by Romanists to be œcumenical and authoritative. "Let the secular powers," says the third canon of the Lateran Council, "whatever offices they may hold, be induced and admonished, and, if need be, compelled by ecclesiastical censure,—that as they desire to be accounted faithful, they should, for the defence of the faith, publicly set forth an oath, that, to the utmost of their power, they will strive to exterminate from the lands under their jurisdiction all heretics who shall be denounced by the Church." "But if any temporal lord, being required and admonished by the Church, shall neglect to cleanse his lands of this heretical filth, let him be bound with the chain of excommunication by the Metropolitan and the other co-provincial bishops. And if he shall scorn to make satisfaction within a year, let this be signified to the Supreme Pontiff, that thenceforth he may declare his vassals absolved from their allegiance to him, and may expose his land to be occupied by the Catholics, who, having exterminated the heretics, may without contradiction possess it, and preserve it in purity of faith."[2] The atrocious doctrine thus authoritatively

[1] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 394–402; iii. pp. 557–582.]

[2] "Moneantur autem et inducantur, et si necesse fuerit, per censuram ecclesiasticam compellantur sæculares potestates, quibuscumque fungantur

set forth by the Fourth Lateran Council, has frequently been disavowed by individual members or doctors of the Church of Rome; and, more especially in later times, has been put as much as possible into the background by those who did not, or could not, disavow it. But it has never been denied or disavowed by the Church of Rome itself; and the greater number of her theologians have ever maintained the dispensing and deposing power of the Pope. Bellarmine, her ablest controversialist, lays down and defends the proposition, that "the Pope has, in order to spiritual good, supreme power to dispose of the temporal affairs of all Christians."[1] And if additional proof were wanted on the point, it would be found in the fact, that the *Gallican Liberties*, the first article of which denies this deposing and dispensing power ascribed to the Pope, have been disapproved by successive Popes, have by the majority of Romanists been accounted heretical, and have been maintained by few beyond the boundaries of the French Church.[2] It is needless to say that the inherent superiority of the spiritual power over the civil, and the consequent right of the Church to dispose of all temporal matters, are flagrantly opposed to the scriptural principles respecting the relation of the Church to the state already laid down.

Not less opposed to the scriptural principles, which determine the proper relation of the Church to the state, is the assertion of the same general claim, although in a somewhat modified shape, in the exemptions and privileges demanded for the clergy by the Church of Rome, in all countries where it has been free to develop its principles, and reduce them to practice. In accord-

officiis, ut sicut reputari cupiunt et haberi fideles, ita pro defensione fidei præstent publice juramentum, quod de terris suæ jurisdictioni subjectis universos hæreticos ab Ecclesia denotatos bona fide pro viribus exterminare studebunt. . . . . Si vero dominus temporalis, requisitus et monitus ab Ecclesia, terram suam purgare neglexerit ab hac hæretica fœditate, per Metropolitanum et cæteros comprovinciales episcopos excommunicationis vinculo innodetur. Et si satisfacere contempserit infra annum significetur hoc Summo Pontifici: ut extunc ipse vasallos ab ejus fidelitate denunciet absolutos, et terram exponat Catholicis occupandam, qui eam exterminatis hæreticis sine ulla contradictione possideant, et in fidei puritate conservent."—Lateran, iv. Can. iii., and iii. Can. xxvii. Perceval, *The Roman Schism*, pp. 128–138.

[1] Bellarm. *Opera*, tom. i. Pars ii. lib. v. cap. 1, 6.

[2] Bossuet, *Defensio Declar. Cler. Gall.* tom. i. pp. 45–46. lib. i. cap. 1, 2; De Maistre, *The Pope, considered in his relations with the Church, Temporal Sovereignties, Separated Churches, and the Cause of Civilisation*, B. ii. cap. 3, 4, 9. [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 133–163. Apollonius, *Jus Maj. circa Sacra*, Pars i. cap. ii. pp. 8–25.]

ance with the general policy of the Popish system, which seeks to make the clergy a distinct body throughout the world, subject only to the Church, and in conformity with its claims of spiritual power, the Church of Rome, wherever it has had the power or opportunity, has demanded, on behalf of the priesthood, more or less of exemption from the ordinary jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, and has claimed, on behalf of ecclesiastical persons and property, rights and immunities not vouchsafed in the case of the rest of the community.[1] It is in opposition to those exemptions and powers claimed by the Church of Rome on behalf of the clergy, that the Westminster Confession declares, in its 23d chapter, that "ecclesiastical persons are not exempted from paying to magistrates tribute and other dues, from obeying their lawful commands, and from being subject to their authority for conscience' sake."[2] Such claims are but part and parcel of the general principle maintained by the Popish system, of the inherent supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal power; and nothing but a right understanding of the position already illustrated, in regard to the relation of the Church to the state, and their mutual independence and essential distinction, will enable us successfully to resist such pretensions, and to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."[3]

SEC. II. THE LAWFULNESS OF THEIR CONNECTION.

In dealing with the subject of the Church in its relations to the state, we have found that the two societies, ecclesiastical and political, are essentially distinct and independent, having each of them a separate existence and action, a co-ordinate authority and will. Upon this fundamental principle we must be prepared to proceed in considering the further question of the possibility and lawfulness of a connection and friendly co-operation between the two. There can in fact be no connection, in the proper sense of the term, when a previous and independent existence is denied to the one or to the other. Deny, on the one hand, the separate character and independent authority of the Church as a visible

[1] Bellarm. *Opera*, tom. ii. Pars ii. lib. i. cap. 28.
[2] Conf. chap. xxiii. 4.
[3] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 402–412; iv. pp. 78–132. Apollonius, *Jus Maj. circ. Sacra*, Pars i. cap. vi. pp. 381–411.]

society, and you supersede the possibility of an alliance between it and the state,—you merge the ecclesiastical in the political body, making it merely one member, and a subordinate one, in the constitution of the state. Deny, on the other hand, the separate character and independent existence of the state, and you equally prevent the possibility of a proper alliance between the two,—you merge the civil in the ecclesiastical body, and make the state a mere function or inferior office of the Church. There have been a number of different theories of the connection between the Church and the state, which have proceeded on an entire forgetfulness of this simple principle, and so have been in reality, not so much theories of the connection or alliance of the two societies, as schemes for their identification, or for the subordination of the one to the other. The essential idea, I repeat, that lies at the foundation of any true conception of a connection between the Church and the state, must be the acknowledgment of their previous existence as separate and independent societies, capable of entering into an alliance upon equal terms, but not capable, without a surrender of their essential character, of becoming one with each other, or subordinate to each other.

How much this has been lost sight of in the attempts made to construct a scheme of the alliance of Church and state, the briefest reference to the history of such attempts will evince. In the eighth Book of his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, we have Hooker's views of the relations of the Church to the state. He there lays down the fundamental position, that in the case of nations professing Christianity there can be no essential distinction between the Church and the state; but inasmuch as they are composed of the same individuals, who on the one hand are subjects of the commonwealth, and on the other are members of the Christian society, these two must be one and the same; and only differ as the same man differs when dealing at one time with secular, and at another time with spiritual, concerns. "The Church and the commonwealth," says Hooker, "are in this case personally one society; which society is termed a commonwealth, as it liveth under whatsoever form of secular law and regiment,—a Church, as it hath the spiritual law of Jesus Christ."[1] It is upon the fundamental principle, thus laid down, of the essential oneness of the Church and state in a professedly Christian country, that Hooker

[1] Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* B. viii. chap. 4.

proceeds to explain and justify the actual relations of the civil government and the religious society, as witnessed in the case of the Church of England, against the objections taken to them by the Puritans. Upon this ground he defends the royal supremacy over the Church, inasmuch as the king, in the common society, is the "highest uncommanded commander," and generally maintains the proper jurisdiction of the civil magistrate within the department of the Church as, in fact, but another department of the commonwealth. The fundamental errors in Hooker's system are, the denial of the essential distinction and independence of the Church and state as two separate bodies, which may co-operate, but cannot merge into each other, and the unfortunate assumption, that the individuals of a professedly Christian nation necessarily compose only one society under two names, rather than two separate societies, accidentally the same to a large extent as to the members they embrace, but not the same as to their true character and proper functions. The moment that the line between the body politic and the body ecclesiastical is obliterated or drawn amiss, that instant the true theory of a proper alliance between the two is hopelessly lost.

The doctrine of Coleridge, in his work *On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the idea of each*, is very similar in this respect to Hooker's. He makes the Church to be one out of the many various estates of the body politic, not essentially distinct from them, and necessary to harmonize and cement together the rest. Like Hooker, he overlooks the fundamental separation between the Church and state as two corporate societies, which, from their very nature, are distinct and independent.[1]

Warburton, in his work *On the Alliance of Church and State*, although taking up somewhat different ground from Hooker, yet virtually lies open to the very same objection. He does not deny, as Hooker does, that the visible Church on the one hand, and the body politic on the other, are two societies, originally separate and distinct in their character; but he denies that the distinction is so fundamental and essential that it cannot be modified or surrendered. The doctrine of Warburton is indeed the doctrine commonly adopted by all the defenders of an Erastian connection between Church and state who have not thought very accurately or earnestly on the subject; and it

[1] Coleridge, *Constitution of the Church and State*, 2d ed. pp. 48-70, 92-104.

virtually amounts to this, that although the two societies are originally distinct and independent, yet the difference is not so vital, nor the independence so essential to their nature, but that the Church may consent to the surrender of its inherent rights, as the price of certain advantages obtained from the state in return. The state requires the assistance of the Church to accomplish some of the objects it has in view; and the Church requires the aid of the state to uphold and protect it. Each, therefore, has reasons of its own for seeking a voluntary alliance and co-operation with the other. And this alliance is completed, when the state endows the Church with a competent maintenance for the clergy, and with certain civil rights for the protection of her authority and discipline; and when the Church, on the other hand, foregoes her original and distinct independence, and becomes the instrument or engine of the state for certain civil purposes. Here, again, we meet the very same disregard of the fundamental and ineffaceable distinction between the two societies as before. With Warburton, the difference between the Church and state is not a difference essential to the idea of each, and therefore never to be abandoned; but one non-essential, and to be surrendered in return for certain accidental advantages. The original independence of the one from the other is admitted; but it is denied that it is an independence belonging to the essence both of the body politic and of the body ecclesiastic, and which cannot, therefore, be sacrificed without the sacrifice of the essential character of the one or the other. With Warburton, the independence of the Church with respect to the civil magistrate is a thing accidental, to be bartered away without the surrender thereby of the true character of a Church of Christ.[1]

The argument of Paley, in his *Moral and Political Philosophy*, for the connection of Church and state, proceeds apparently upon the disavowal of a visible Church as a corporate society altogether. According to Paley, the state, in seeking an ecclesiastical connection, forms an alliance, not so much with another society equally independent and equally organized with itself, as with a form of religion, apart from any corporate religious body. To quote his own words, "the single view under which we ought to consider any of them is that of *a scheme of instruction;* the single end we ought to propose by them is *the preservation and com-*

[1] Warburton, *Alliance of Church and State*, *Works*, vol. vii. B. ii.

munication of religion." In conformity with this idea, Paley tells us that the only three things comprehended in the notion of a religious establishment are: "a clergy, or an order of men excluded from other professions, to attend upon the offices of religion; a legal provision for the maintenance of the clergy; and the confining of that provision to the teachers of a particular sect of Christianity."[1] From Paley's notion, then, of a religious establishment, the idea of a Church as a visible and corporate society, vested with certain powers and rights and privileges as a corporate society, is totally excluded; and the Church is regarded in the single aspect of a number of men set apart to teach a certain form of religious faith. It is plain that such a scheme denies or ignores the existence of a visible Church altogether,—affording another example of the position, that there can be no true conception of the proper alliance of Church and state which does not set out from the fact of the distinct and independent existence of the two as separate societies.

There is one other theory of the connection between the Church and state, of which the late Dr. Arnold of Rugby may be taken as the most eminent English representative in recent times. It is in some respects the opposite of those already mentioned, and yet it stands exposed to the very same objection in point of principle,—that, namely, of denying the essential distinction between the two societies of the Church and state, and proceeding upon the possibility of identifying or confounding the two. When a nation turns Christian in outward profession, instead of the Church being, according to Hooker, merged in the state, the state, in Arnold's theory, is merged in the Church. "By so doing," says Arnold, "it—*i.e.* the state—becomes a part of Christ's Holy Catholic Church,—not allied with it, which implies distinctness from it, but transformed into it."[2] Under what is apparently an opposite phraseology, the theory of Arnold, like some of those already referred to, proceeds upon the principle that it is possible to merge into one two societies which, according to the Scripture view of them, are distinct and independent in their origin, in their aims, in the power that belongs to them, and in the manner of administering that power. Grant that the Church

[1] Paley, *Principles of Mor. and Polit. Phil.* 26th ed. vol. ii. B. vi. chap. x. pp. 312–356.

[2] Arnold, *Fragment on the Church*, 2d ed. p. 177.

and state are thus separate and independent, and it is plainly impossible that the one should be merged in the other, or the office of the one discharged by the other, unless either the ecclesiastical or the civil society is to sacrifice something of the proper character and essential nature that belong to it. It is competent for the two to enter into connection upon equal terms; it is not competent for them to enter into connection through the surrender, on either side, of an independence that essentially and inalienably appertains to each.

There is one fundamental condition, then, essential to an alliance between the Church and state, and on which both parties in the alliance have equally a right to insist: the condition, namely, that the Church and the state, as distinct societies, shall be recognised as mutually independent in their existence and entire offices and functions. Without this, there can be no true or scriptural alliance; and any connection formed must involve an Erastian or Popish encroachment on the one side or other. Now, what is implied in this fundamental condition of the alliance? *First*, on the side of the Church, there is implied that the Church has a right, from her Divine Head, to the full possession and free use of all the powers and prerogatives which He has vested in her, without interference or obstruction of any kind from the civil magistrate. In preaching the truth according to Christ's Word, in administering ordinances according to His appointment, in exercising authority and discipline in conformity with His gift and injunction, the Church must be free to judge and act for herself according to the law of Scripture, without responsibility to or interference from the state. All this is implied in the office and function of a Church as essentially belonging to her, and which she can on no terms surrender, but must ever and uninterruptedly assert. In any alliance between the Church and the state, the Christian society has a right to expect that these things shall be expressly guaranteed to her by the civil magistrate, as the fundamental condition of the alliance; or, in other words, the Church has a right to expect from the state a *legal recognition* of her character, powers, and freedom, as a Church. *Second*, on the side of the state, there is implied that the state has a certain province and express authority appointed to it by God, and that, in the administration of the civil powers and offices thus belonging to it, it shall be free from the encroachment or opposition of the

Church. In following out the office and duties of the civil magistracy, the magistrate has a right to expect that the spiritual society shall interpose no let or hindrance in the way of that authority and freedom which, within their own province, God has given to the civil powers as His ordinance for good. In other words, in any alliance entered into between the Church and state, the state has a right to demand a guarantee from the Church in regard to its principles and practice, or a *Confession of Faith*, in which the civil magistrate may receive a declaration of the doctrines which the Church is to promulgate, of the rule of discipline by which she acts, and of the extent and limits of that authority which she claims. These two things seem to be implied in any safe or scriptural adjustment of the terms of alliance between the Church and state, and are necessary to secure the equal and mutual independence of the two parties in the alliance: *first*, a legal recognition, on the part of the state, of the freedom and powers of the Church; and, *second*, a confession of its faith on the part of the Church, for the satisfaction and security of the state.

Taking, then, these two conditions as essential to any true or scriptural basis for the alliance of Church and state, the question at once meets us: Is it possible, on these terms, for the state to form a connection with the Church, or is it lawful for the Church, on such conditions, to enter into an alliance with the state? Can the state, on receiving from the Church an authoritative declaration of its form of faith and rule of discipline and claim of authority, and approving of the same, enter into friendly co-operation and compact with it? Can the Church, on receiving from the state a legal recognition of and security for its spiritual powers and privileges, accept of the alliance and sanction of the state? The higher and further question of *duty* in the matter—the question of the obligation that may rest upon one or both of these parties to form such a connection—I postpone for future consideration. I confine myself at present to the single point of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of such an alliance between the Church and state; and in briefly considering it, I shall give rather the principles on which the question may be argued, than the argument itself.

I. In the first place, there is a foundation laid for a friendly alliance between the Church and state, in the fact of the twofold

character which Christ sustains of Head of the Church, and also of Head over all things *to* the Church.

That civil government is an ordinance of God, as the God of nature and not of grace, is a most important truth, and one that lies at the foundation of the essential difference between the state and the Church, which owes its origin to Christ as Mediator.[1] But it is no less true that God has handed over to Christ, as Mediator, the ordinance of civil government, to be employed by Him in subordination to the great purposes of His mediatorial reign. Among "*the all things*" over which Christ is now made Head *to* the Church, is to be numbered the ordinance of magistracy or civil government in this world,—a truth which seems unquestionably to draw with it the conclusion that, in the hands of Christ, and under His control, the civil government of nations may be made instrumental in advancing the interests and promoting the well-being of the Church. In the joint dominion to which Christ has been exalted, both over the state and over the Church, and in the express and avowed object for which this dominion has been vouchsafed to Him, we recognise a foundation laid for those two Divine ordinances, originally separate and still essentially distinct, becoming serviceable and advantageous to each other. In the assertion that Christ is made Head over the kingdoms of men for the good of His Church, there is unquestionably implied the further assertion, that Christ can make the kingdoms of men, in one way or other, contribute to the well-being of His Church. Even were the state to be identified with the world as ungodly and alienated from Christ—as many Voluntaries are accustomed to identify it—still He could, by His power and grace, convert the state, as He does convert even wicked men, into the unwitting instruments for promoting the interests of His Church. But the state is not to be identified or confounded with a world that lieth in wickedness. It is an ordinance of God, both good in itself and appointed for good. The very end for which it has been placed under subjection to the Messiah is, that it may be instrumental, under Him, for securing the spiritual interests and promoting the welfare of His kingdom of grace; and it approaches very nearly to the assertion that Christ has failed in the object for which He has been set over it as

[1] [Apollonius, *Jus Majestatis circa Sacra*, Pars i. cap. ii. pp. 33–39; *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part ii. chap. v.]

Head, to assert that the state, from its nature or constitution, cannot in any manner be converted into a willing and conscious instrument for promoting the prosperity of the Church, and advancing the cause of Christianity. In the common subordination to Christ which the body politic and body ecclesiastical alike underlie, and in the object which is to be promoted by that subordination, we see the foundation laid for a friendly alliance and co-operation between Church and state. Distinct and separate in their essential character, they are yet brought into one through their mutual subjection to the same Divine Head, and their mutual subserviency to the same gracious purpose. Fundamentally unlike in their character on earth, they are resolved into a higher unity through means of one Head in heaven. The Church and the state, because equally the servants of Christ, are helps made and meet for each other.[1]

II. In the second place, there is a foundation laid for a friendly connection between the Church and state, in the fact that they have certain ends of an important kind in common.

No doubt there are certain ends of a temporal kind which it is the immediate and primary object of the state to attain, and which are not directly contemplated by the Church; and, on the other hand, there are certain ends of a spiritual kind which it is the immediate and primary duty of the Church to subserve, and which the state does not directly contemplate. In this we recognise and assert an element that goes to prove the fundamental distinction between the two. But it is perfectly consistent with this to assert that there are certain objects which the Church and state may contemplate and subserve in common, and which it is their duty to promote together; although these may not be the primary and immediate objects for which they both were instituted. This is a general position, which may be safely laid down, notwithstanding of the objections taken by Voluntaries against it. I do not now enter upon the question whether the civil magistrate, as such, is equally bound with the Church to contemplate in his actings the glory of God, and to strive to promote the spiritual interests of the community. This is a question which will fall to be discussed afterwards, and which at the present stage of the argument we can afford to postpone. It is enough

[1] [*Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part ii. chap. ix. sec. i. *Lectures on Civil Establishments of Religion*, Edin. 1835, Lec. i. pp. 16–25.]

for our present purpose to assert—and it would be difficult directly to contradict the averment—that there is a large class of duties as between man and man, and not as between man and God, which it is the joint province and end both of the Church and the state to promote. The first Table of the moral law comprehends an order of duties which it is the main and direct object of the Church to inculcate and advance among men, and which Voluntaries will not admit to appertain in any sense to the civil magistrate. But setting aside these, there are the duties of the second Table of the moral law, which no one can pretend to deny are the concern of the state as much as of the Church. The life of man, as entrusted to the keeping of his fellow-men, or exposed to their violence; the ordinance of marriage, with its rights and privileges both civil and sacred; the property of man, with the laws that regulate its possession, and declare the guilt of encroachment upon it; the duty and solemnity of an oath, which forms the cement of civilised society, and without which it could not cohere as a society at all; the obligation of honesty and justice between man and man, and the peace and contentment of each with his lot and outward estate: these are matters which are equally the concernment of the civil magistrate and of the Christian Church, and fall equally in one shape or other within the province of both. Whatever peculiar and more immediate objects may fall directly under the contemplation of the Church and state respectively, there can be no doubt that there are certain ends—indirectly, it may be, as regards the one or the other—that are common to both, and after the attainment of which it is the duty of both alike to strive. There is common ground here where the Church and state may meet,—where, in fact, they *must* meet, unless they would abdicate their functions and deny their responsibility. There is such a community of duty and interest between the Church and state in regard to these matters, that they must act in concert, either more or less openly avowed, if they act at all; and we see the foundation laid in the fact of their having such ends in common for a friendly alliance and co-operation between the two.[1]

III. In the third place, there is a common ground laid for the possibility and lawfulness of a friendly alliance between the

[1] [*Lectures on Civil Establishments of Religion*, Edin. 1835, Pref. Disc. pp. 10, 11, 50–61; Lec. i. pp. 14–16, 45–53.]

Church and the state, in the fact that they may or do consist of the same individuals.

From this fact, that the Church and state among a Christian people embrace very much the same membership, Hooker and others, in their schemes of connection between the two, were led to infer a substantial identity between the two societies, as being innately not two, but only one under two names. But although this conclusion has been drawn in defiance of the fundamental distinction which both Scripture and reason lead us to recognise between the body ecclesiastical and the body political, yet there can be no doubt that the fact on which it professes to be based does furnish a satisfactory foundation on which to rest an argument for the expediency and practicability of a friendly alliance between them. The twofold character which the members of the Church, being at the same moment the members of the state, in these two respects sustain, unavoidably leads to some sort of friendly understanding between the two societies. A member or office-bearer of the Church, when he becomes invested with civil influence or office, cannot denude himself of his previous character, or cease to recognise the duties and obligations which that character implies. Into his new position as a member of the civil society, he must carry his former and still subsisting obligations as a member of the Church; and unless it be alleged that the duties and offices of the state are unlawful to a Christian, there must be some way or other in which the two can be discharged in harmony and concert. In other words, the duty of the member of the Church and the duty of the member of the state cannot be contradictory to each other, but must be in harmony in such a sense that they may be binding on the same individual conscience, and may be discharged by the same individual man without opposition, or rather with perfect adaptation to each other. And what takes place in the instance of the individual must also take place in the instance of the community, or the collection and combination of individuals. There is no new element of disturbance or hostility introduced when certain things come to be the duty, not of the individual, but of the whole body, whether of the Church or state, and when these two are called upon to act under their respective obligations together. Their duties are not in opposition, but in adaptation to each other. The entire membership of the state may also be the membership

of the Church, and in their twofold capacity find nothing to put the duties of the one character in hostility to the duties of the other, but the reverse. In the fact that the body politic and the body ecclesiastical do or may consist of the same individuals, there is the foundation laid for the possibility and the lawfulness of a friendly co-operation between them.

IV. In the fourth place, there is a foundation laid for asserting the lawfulness of a friendly connection between the Church and state, in the fact that such a connection is actually exemplified in Scripture, with the direct sanction and approbation of God Himself.

Into the nature or peculiarities of the civil establishment of religion under the Jewish dispensation, it is not at all necessary that we should at present inquire. It is enough for us to know the fact, that under the Jewish economy there was a close and intimate union between the Church and the state—between religion on the one hand, and the civil magistrate on the other. The Church and state were not merged into each other under that system, but still remained separate and independent. They were different in regard to their laws, to their office-bearers, and to a certain extent in regard to their members; but nevertheless they were nearly connected, and that, too, for a lengthened period of time, and under the express sanction of the Almighty. In this fact we acknowledge and assert a warrant for the alliance of things civil and sacred, for the connection and co-operation together of the king and the priest, of the throne and the altar. It is altogether irrelevant to the argument to dwell, as the advocates of Voluntary principles are accustomed to do, on the peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation, and more especially on the peculiarities of the Jewish Church and state, as if these were sufficient to set aside the fact that the lawfulness of a union between the two has already been sanctioned in the history of God's own people, and by the immediate command of God Himself.[1] There were peculiarities in the Jewish dispensation, typical or ceremonial, and not universally applicable, or to be drawn into precedent for all time. There were peculiarities in the case both of the Church and state among the Jews, forming no pattern for our imitation. Nay, there may have been peculiarities in regard to the endowment and pecuniary support of the Church in Israel,

[1] [Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments farther Considered*, Glasgow 1831, pp. 67–87.]

suited to them, and not binding on us. But unless it can be proved that the Jewish Church was no Church at all, and that the Jewish state was no state, the fact of the union between them under the express appointment of God cannot be got rid of. There was no peculiarity about the Jewish Church such as to render it no Church at all; and there was no peculiarity about the Jewish state such that it forfeited its character as a civil government. Whatever other purposes, typical or temporary, the Church under the former dispensation might be intended to serve, it was unquestionably intended to accomplish the purposes of a Church in regard to the people of God,—differing, indeed, in outward form and accidental circumstances from the Christian Church, but really the same in its essential character and nature. In the same manner, whatever extraordinary features or peculiarities may have been superinduced upon it, there can be no dispute as to the fact that the civil state of the Jews was the ordinance of God to them in the same manner as the state is to us. And if the Church of God, as a Church, was intimately connected with the state as the state, under a former economy, the difference of that economy from our own in temporary or typical peculiarities will not overturn the fact of such a connection, or invalidate the warrant that it affords for an alliance of some kind or another between the spiritual society on the one hand and the civil magistrate on the other. We see the Church of the Jews standing in the relation of connection to the state of the Jews, and that under the express warrant of God; and there is no way to evade the force of the argument drawn from the fact in favour of the lawfulness of such a connection, except by asserting—what few perhaps will venture to assert—that the Church under that dispensation was no Church, but the type of one, or that the state was not a civil government, but a typical or temporary peculiarity also.

Upon principles such as these, it is not difficult to establish the lawfulness of a friendly alliance and co-operation between the Church, in all the integrity of its spiritual powers and independence on the one hand, and the state in all the fulness of its civil supremacy on the other.[1] This is arguing the question of the

[1] M'Crie, *Statement*, pp. 10–13, 109–141. Symington, *Messiah the Prince*, 2d ed. pp. 300–358. [Turrettin, *Opera*, tom. iii. Loc. xviii. Qu. 34. *Lectures on Civil Establishments of Religion*, Edin. 1835, Lec. i. Chalmers, *Lectures on Religious Establishments*, Lec. i., Works, vol. xvii. pp. 187–217.]

competency of civil establishments of religion on the lowest grounds. But there is a higher position that ought to be taken up,—the position, namely, of the duty and obligation resting on the Church and state respectively, as separate ordinances of God adapted to each other, to seek and occupy a common ground in advancing His glory and His work on earth. Before proceeding, however, to discuss this subject, it may be well to advert briefly to an attempt which has been made to evade the force of the very strong, and I believe irresistible, argument last brought forward in favour of the lawfulness of an alliance on sound and scriptural principles between Church and state.

Subsec. *The Non-identity of Church and State among the Jews.*

It has been maintained by some writers that the distinction between Church and state was unknown before the introduction of Christianity, and that among the Jews, in particular, they were really one and the same. This position has often been taken up by Erastians, and has sometimes been unwisely conceded to them. It was held by Erastus himself, who asserted that the civil and the ecclesiastical government among the ancient people of God were vested in the same hands, and formed only different functions of the same society, and argued that what was lawful then could not reasonably be regarded as in itself unlawful now.[1] Beza, in reply, denied the grounds on which Erastus founded his argument, and proved the essential distinctness of the Jewish Church and state with great ability and success.[2] The same point was discussed by various writers during the course of the Erastian controversy in Holland. It came into special prominence at the time of the Westminster Assembly, when the position of Erastus was taken up and defended with much display of Rabbinical learning by Selden, Lightfoot, and others. They were conclusively answered, however, by Gillespie and Rutherford; the masterly work of the former of whom is especially worthy of being consulted for a clear, full, and satisfactory discussion of this, as of every other favourite Erastian argument.[3]

[1] Erastus, *Theses de Excommun.* xlviii.–lii. lxxiii. lxxiv. *Confirmatio Thesium*, Lib. iii. cap. i. ii; Lib. iv. cap. iii.

[2] Beza, *Tractatus de ver. Excommun. et Christ. Presbyterio*, Genevæ 1591, pp. 99–116.

[3] Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. i. Rutherford, *Divine Right of Church Government*, chap. xiv. xv. Hetherington, *History of Westminster Assembly*, c. iv.

That the civil and the ecclesiastical society were essentially separate and independent, although allied, under the Jewish dispensation, may be proved by the following considerations, which we can merely indicate in the briefest way, without entering into details:—

I. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of their origin. The Jewish state was, in the strict and literal sense of the word, a theocracy. God, who has revealed Himself to men as the Supreme Ruler and Governor of all the nations of the earth, revealed Himself of old as the Ruler of the Jewish nation in a special and peculiar sense. Civil government among the Hebrews had its origin from God as the King of Israel. "By Him their kings ruled, and their princes decreed justice." Not so in regard to the Jewish Church. There is a distinction clearly and repeatedly drawn in the Old Testament between Jehovah as the King of Israel, and Jehovah as the Angel of the Covenant, who led the people out of Egypt, who went before them through the wilderness, who was seen in the Shekinah, in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple. It was from the latter, not from the former, that the ecclesiastical government of the Hebrews had its origin. The Church of the Old Testament, like the Church of the New, had the Second Person of the Godhead for its Founder and its Head.

II. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of the objects which they contemplated and the ends which they had in view respectively.

In this respect we see precisely the same distinction between the two societies as is witnessed among ourselves. The state was established among the Jews for the protection of life and property, for the preservation of civil order, for the punishment of evil-doers, for the promotion of the temporal well-being and advantage of all classes of the community. The Church, again, was established for religious and spiritual ends; and in seeking to attain these, it dealt with such matters as the manner, place, times, and arrangements of the worship of God, the conditions of acceptance with Him, the method of atonement for breaches of His commands, and generally all matters directly bearing on personal and public morality and religion. On the ground of this difference rests the well-known distinction between the political and judicial laws of the Jews on the one hand, and the

ceremonial and moral laws upon the other; the former class of precepts being those belonging to the state, the latter those connected with the Church.

III. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of the nature of the power which they exercised respectively.

Here, again, the very same difference is to be observed between the two societies as exists under the present dispensation. It is true, indeed, that exceptional instances may be pointed out of individual men who, in virtue of an extraordinary commission from God, united civil and ecclesiastical functions in their own persons. Such an instance we have in the case of Moses, whose extraordinary mission, in the peculiar and transitional circumstances of the nation at the time, entitled him to the possession and exercise of power alike in Church and state.[1] But setting aside this, and perhaps one or two similar instances, which are clearly of an exceptional kind, and easily to be explained from the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances of the case, the line of distinction between civil and ecclesiastical power among the Jews is broad and strongly marked. The power exercised by the Jewish state was purely civil and coercive in its nature. This is evident from the kind of penalties inflicted, such as fines, scourging, death by stoning, or hanging on a tree. The power exercised by the Jewish Church, on the other hand, was not coercive, but spiritual in its nature. It did not affect the properties or the lives of men, but was exerted in the way of warning, rebuke, ecclesiastical censure, and finally excommunication, or "cutting off from the congregation." This power of excommunication, or of inflicting the last and highest of ecclesiastical penalties, we find still vested in and wielded by the Jewish Church in our Lord's time. The "casting out of the synagogue" (*ἀποσυναγωγος γενεσθαι*), repeatedly spoken of in the New Testament,[2] is precisely identical with the "cutting off from the congregation of Israel" (הִכָּרֵת מֵעֲדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל) so often mentioned in the Old. That this was a strictly ecclesiastical sentence inflicted for religious offences, and that it did not imply the punishment of death, is plain from various considerations. 1. It was awarded for sins of ignorance and infirmity, and accidental ceremonial de-

[1] Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. i. Append. pp. 66-68.
[2] John ix. 22, xii. 42, xvi. 2.

filements, which could not be punished with death. A man might be "cut off from the congregation," or as it is sometimes expressed, "cut off from the presence of the Lord,"[1] for accidentally touching a bone, or coming in contact with a dead body, or eating blood. These and similar offences against the ceremonial laws of Israel involved a temporary suspension from Church fellowship; they were not, and could not be, regarded as involving the death of the offender.[2] 2. The sentence of excommunication, or "cutting off from the congregation," was inflicted on account of offences for which certain sacrifices and purifications were appointed, in order to bring about the restoration of the excommunicated person to the full privileges of the Church. Such sacrifices and cleansings were never appointed or allowed in the case of criminal offences. 3. The same thing is proved by a comparison of the parallel passages in the New Testament. When the Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians, in respect of one of their number who had been guilty of an incestuous marriage, "to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh," to "put away (ἐξαρειτε) from among themselves that wicked person;" or when he expressed his desire that the false teachers who had disturbed the peace of the Galatian Churches "should be even cut off" from among them (ὀφελον και ἀποκοψονται οἱ ἀναστατουντες ὑμας),[3] he was using language precisely similar both to that of the Evangelist John in recording the casting out of the synagogue of the blind man healed by Christ on the Sabbath-day,[4] and to that of the Old Testament with respect to "cutting off from the congregation." In all the cases just referred to, it

[1] Lev. xxii. 3; comp. Gen. iv. 14, 16.

[2] ["If all the offences," says Gillespie, "for which 'cutting off' was threatened in the law had been punished by death, the Mosaical laws, no less than those of Draco, might have been said to be written in blood. Is it credible that all and every one who did by any chance eat the fat or the blood, or did make a perfume for smell like to the holy perfume, or did touch a dead body, or a grave, or a tent wherein a man had died, or anything that an unclean person had touched, and had not been thereafter sprinkled with the water of separation, were without mercy to die for any of these things? Yet these were 'cut off' from among their people. Ex. xxx. 38; Lev. vii. 15, 17; Num. xix. 13, 20."—*Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. i. c. v. p. 27.]

[3] 1 Cor. v. 2, 5, 13; Gal. v. 12. [Both ἐξαιρω and ἀποκοπτω are repeatedly used by the LXX. for כָּרַת in the phrase "to cut off from the congregation," or "from Israel."]

[4] John ix. 22, 34, 35. [Beza, *Tract. de ver. Excom. et Presbyt.*, Genevæ 1591, pp. 81–84.]

is the same ecclesiastical sentence of excommunication that is spoken of; and surely the conclusion is obvious, that no more in the latter case than in the former did that sentence involve the infliction of death.[1]

IV. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of the administration of the power exercised by each respectively.

The rulers and judges who were appointed to hold office in the state for the transaction of civil affairs, were entirely distinct and separate from the priests and Levites, who held office in the Church for the transaction of spiritual affairs and the charge of the interests of religion. The elders who "sat in the gate of the city" are not to be confounded with the elders who formed the sanhedrim of the synagogue. Thus, for instance, to refer to only a few out of the many passages which might be adduced in this connection: in Deut. xviii. 8–12 a distinction is manifestly made between the sentences pronounced by "the priests the Levites," and those pronounced by "the judge;" and it is intimated (ver. 12) that both courts of appeal were supreme, and their decisions final in their own provinces. In 2 Chron. xix. 5–11 an account is given of the measures taken by Jehoshaphat for restoring and promoting order and constitutional government both in the Church and state department. Holding the very first rank among those measures of reformation we find the establishment or renewed confirmation of a civil and an ecclesiastical sanhedrim. The distinction here taken between the duties of the two courts, and the office-bearers of whom they were composed, is clear and unmistakeable. The "matters of the Lord" over which "Amariah the chief priest" was to preside, are most undeniably separated from "all the king's matters" over which, in the civil sanhedrim, "Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah," was appointed.[2]

[1] [M. Renan, indeed, is quite as certain that excommunication in the early Christian Church meant death, as many Erastian writers are that "cutting off from the congregation" always implied death among the Jews. At such a state of things he is very justly indignant. Every such ecclesiastical sentence was, in reality, "un attentat punissable devant la loi civile. . . . Certes, si l'autorité romaine s'était bornée à réformer chez les juifs et les chrétiens des principes aussi condamnables elle aurait eu mille fois raison."—*Les Apôtres*, pp. 88, 89.]

[2] Compare also Ex. xxiv. 1; 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, 13–32, xxvi. 29–32; Jer. xxvi. 8–24, etc. Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. i. chap. iii.

V. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of their members.

To a large extent, of course, the two societies in Israel were actually made up of the same persons; just as, under the present dispensation, in professedly Christian countries the nominal membership of the Church and state may at some periods nearly coincide. But the conditions of membership of the body ecclesiastical and the body politic were by no means identical among the Jews any more than they are so among ourselves. All born Israelites were *ipso facto* members or citizens of the Jewish state; but all born Israelites were not *ipso facto* members of the Jewish Church. They might be uncircumcised, or temporarily unclean, or under synagogue censure; and in each and all of those cases they were excluded from the membership of the Church. And, on the other hand, a man might be a member of the Church without on that account becoming a member of the commonwealth of Israel. Such, for example, was the case with the class known among the Jews as "proselytes of righteousness." They were members of the Jewish Church, but they were not members of the Jewish state.

On all these grounds, then, we conclude that the ecclesiastical and the civil societies among the ancient people of God were essentially distinct and independent; and that the argument, therefore, drawn from the facts of the Old Testament dispensation in favour of the lawfulness of an alliance between Church and state remains unimpaired.[1]

SEC. III. THE DUTY OF THEIR CONNECTION.

In entering on the question of the duty resting upon the Church and state respectively to endeavour to establish and uphold a friendly connection, there is a preliminary distinction which it is of some importance to keep in view. There is an important difference between the *recognition* of the Church by the state, and the *maintenance* of the Church by the state. For the state to recognise the Church as a Divine institution, to acknowledge its origin and claims to be from God, to confess that the doctrine which it teaches is the truth of God, and that the outward order and government of the Christian society are

[1] Vitringa, *De Synagoga Vetere*, Lib. i. Pars ii., Lib. ii. Pars. i. c. x. Apollonius, *Jus Majestatis circa Sacra*, Pars ii. cap. i. Ayton, *Constitution of the Christian Church*, chap. ii. pp. 54–80.

His appointment,—this is one thing; and it is, we believe, an incumbent duty on the part of a Christian state at all times. For the state to go beyond a public recognition and acknowledgment of the Church, and to lend its aid in the way of pecuniary support to its ministry and ordinances; to *endow* as well as to *recognise* the Christian society,—this is another thing, and a duty that may be incumbent on a Christian state or not, according to circumstances. To avow the truth of God, and to render the homage of a formal and public recognition to that Church which He has established on the earth, is a duty, as we believe, of universal obligation, to be discharged by a Christian state at all times and under all circumstances. The further step of supplying the pecuniary aid necessary to endow the Church and support the teachers of the truth, is one which the circumstances of the state and Church may render imperative or not at different times, according as those circumstances may differ. In determining the duty or expediency of state endowments in any particular case, many practical considerations must be taken into account. It may not be in the power of the civil magistrate to endow, through means of the money of the whole community, the Church of a fraction. The state of the nation or of the Church may render the attempt to endow the latter, although possible, inexpedient for the one or the other. But these considerations do not apply to the recognition of the Church by the state. To recognise the Church of Christ is a duty, not dependent on any local circumstances, but of universal obligation in the instance of a Christian nation or state. The duty of a Christian magistrate, like that of a Christian man, may be exhausted when he avows his religious profession, and lends his testimony to the truth of God, even although circumstances should make it impossible or inexpedient for the magistrate, as for the man, to follow it up by giving pecuniary support in aid of the Church. In both cases the duty of pecuniary endowment or contribution is one to be judged of by circumstances; the duty of recognition is one independent of such circumstances.

Bearing this distinction along with us, let us consider the grounds on which it may be asserted that it is the duty of the state and the Church respectively to seek a friendly alliance or connection—at least to the extent of a public recognition of the Church by the state, and, if circumstances permit or require it,

to the extent of the pecuniary endowment of the Church by the state. In dealing with a subject so wide, and with so many different bearings, it will be impossible to do more than merely indicate the principles on which it may be argued.

I. The first principle, then, which I lay down is, that both the state and the Church are to be accounted moral parties responsible to God.

Like the individuals of which they are composed, the body politic and the body ecclesiastical have each a distinct moral personality, capable of right and wrong, and therefore directly accountable to God. Were the state and the Church in their corporate capacity to be viewed as divested of all moral character, and strangers to moral responsibility, there could be no such thing as duty predicated in regard to them. In such a case they could not do either right or wrong. But the fundamental principle that lies at the basis of the whole argument on this subject is, that both the state and the Church, made up as they are of moral and responsible individuals, and speaking and acting as they do through the organs or office-bearers that represent them, have themselves, as corporate societies, a moral character and a distinct responsibility. Like the individuals of which they are composed, the political society on the one hand, and the ecclesiastical society on the other, have each a distinct personality, in such a sense that each acts and resolves; and that for the action and resolution it incurs a moral obligation, and is responsible to God.

There is a subtle misapprehension current on this subject, as if men individually and personally were responsible, but as if the responsibility were at an end when they entered into a society, whether political or ecclesiastical, and thereby assumed a corporate or collective character. The very reverse of this is the case. Whatever moral character or whatever moral responsibility attaches to a man considered simply as an individual, is *added to*, and not diminished, when, in addition to his character as a man, he is to be viewed as joined to a society whether political or ecclesiastical, and becomes a citizen or Church member. The moral responsibility which he owed and felt as an individual, still belongs to him as a member of the state or of the Church. Instead of being diminished or cancelled, that responsibility is augmented by the additional obligations appropriate to the character of a citizen or Church member; and the body or society

to which he is joined, in its corporate and collective capacity, derives from its members a moral character, and becomes itself responsible for all its actions. Take the case of any voluntary society gathered together for some purpose of science or humanity. The members of such a society do not sink their individual responsibility when they become members; on the contrary, they impart that responsibility to the society itself. The actions of the society, done in the name of the society, and by the appointment of the whole members, partake as much of a moral character, and are to be as much accounted right or wrong, as if they had been the acts of the individuals separately of which it is composed. The society, even though a mere voluntary society, is to be accounted a moral person, with duties and obligations incumbent upon it, and in all of them responsible to God.

Does it, I ask, add to or take from the force of this argument, that the state and the Church are not, properly speaking, voluntary societies, but ordinances of God? It plainly adds to the force of the argument. If, in the case of a merely voluntary society, the society in its collective capacity is to be regarded as a moral person, having a will and a conscience subject to the law of God, and as much responsible in its corporate character as are the individuals who compose it; much more must the state and the Church as such be accounted responsible to God for what they resolve and do. The very fact that they are God's ordinances, founded in His appointment and resting on His authority, tends to bind all the more strongly upon them as societies a moral and responsible character. If they have received certain additional rights from Him, they have come under certain additional duties and responsibilities also. There is an individual responsibility that attaches to every man as the very creature of God, which he can no more divest himself of than he can divest himself of the character of a creature. There is a collective responsibility that attaches to every society, as a society, which it can no more divest itself of than can the members that compose it. For a man to deny his responsibility, were an attempt to set himself up beyond the reach of God's moral government, and to make himself free from the eternal law of obligation to Him. For a society, whether political or ecclesiastical, to disown its responsibility, is an attempt equally vain and equally impious. In his will and in his conscience, in his resolutions and actions, man is under law to God,

and cannot be free. In all that it resolves and does, every society of men in their collective capacity is no less under law, and responsible to God. So clear and incontrovertible are the grounds on which our first position may be maintained, that both the state and the Church are to be accounted parties morally responsible to God.

II. The second position that I lay down is, that both the Church and state, in consequence of this responsibility to God, are bound to own and recognise His revealed word.

This second position may be regarded as a corollary from the first. It follows very directly from the fact, that both the Church and state sustain a moral character, have a conscience to discriminate between right and wrong, and in what they resolve or do are directly responsible to God. There is, of course, a material difference in this respect between the Christian and the civil society,—the Christian society or Church being founded for the express and immediate purpose of being a witness to the truth of God in the face of the world, and the profession of the true faith being of the very essence of a Church, in the absence of which it would cease to be a Church at all; whereas the civil society, or the state, has been founded and exists for other immediate objects. But the duty of a Christian Church to profess the true religion, although more immediate and direct, does ultimately rest on the very same footing as does the duty of a Christian state. In both cases it is because they are to be regarded as the moral creatures of God—responsible to Him for what they resolve and do—that we are to hold them bound to own His name, to recognise His will, and to confess and bear witness unto His truth. The truth of this position, in so far as it bears upon the Church, no one, of course, is disposed to deny. For this end was the Church instituted, that it might be a witness for the word of God on the earth. But the truth of this position is denied by the advocates of the Voluntary cause, in so far as it bears on the state. It is affirmed that the state, as the state, has nothing to do with religion; that it has no duty or obligation to discharge in reference to the revealed will of God; and that it is bound to maintain neutrality between the profession and the denial of Christianity.[1]

[1] [Wardlaw, *National Church Establishments Examined*, London 1839, Lec. iv. p. 191. Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments farther Considered*, Glasgow 1831, pp. 112, 113, 303.]

Now, if this doctrine has any meaning whatever, it must mean that the state, as a corporate body, is not responsible to God at all. If the civil magistrate is not divested of the responsibility that attaches to every creature,—if he is not, alone of all others, free from a law that binds him, according to his nature and capacity as a creature, to own and honour God in all that he does,—then it cannot be denied, with any show of reason, that he lies under an obligation to receive and submit to God's revealed will. The civil magistrate, as the organ of the state, has the Word of God in his hands. Admit him to be a moral and responsible agent in his official character, and he necessarily incurs obligation in reference to that relation, in the same manner as any other moral and responsible man. He can acquit himself of that responsibility and discharge those obligations in no other way than by receiving that revelation as God's, submitting himself to it as such, and regulating his conduct by it in so far as its statements apply to his case. It cannot be alleged that the state, officially as the state, is incompetent to own and recognise the revelation of God, in the same sense that the irrational and irresponsible creatures are incompetent. On the contrary, there is involved in the very idea of responsibility an understanding, a will, a conscience, that make the state both capable of discerning between the truth of God and a lie, and accountable for doing so; and unless you deny this responsibility altogether, and affirm that the state cannot do right or do wrong, you are forced to admit that the very first and chiefest act for which it is responsible, is the act of owning or rejecting the revelation which God has given of His will. I do not, at this stage of the argument, speak of the duty of the state to *endow* the true religion,—I speak merely of the duty of the state to *recognise* the true religion; and that duty, as attaching to a Christian state, it is impossible to deny, unless upon the ground of a denial of the responsibility of the state as a moral agent altogether. Voluntaries freely admit that the state has a responsibility in reference to other states and to its own individual members. The state sustains a moral character, and is capable of right or wrong in its transactions with other states, in its tactics of war and peace, in its covenants fiscal and commercial. The state sustains a moral character, and is capable of right and wrong in its dealings with its own subjects, in its internal laws and regulations, in its acts

legislative and executive. In all these cases no one dreams of denying that the state is a moral and intelligent agent, having an understanding and a conscience to discern between right and wrong, and responsible for doing so. Is it, then, only in reference to God and the revelation of God that the state stands divested of its moral character and responsibility, having no duty to discharge, and no accountability to incur? Is the state alone, of all the creatures of His hands, not under law to God, and having warrant to disown Him? This cannot be. As the moral creature of God,—more especially as His express ordinance,—the civil magistrate or the state is responsible to Him; and because responsible, is bound in its place, and according to its nature, to own and recognise His revealed will.

III. The third position that I lay down is, that the state, by a regard to itself, and to the very objects for which it exists as a state, is bound to recognise the true religion, and, so far as it is in its power, to promote its interests.

After what has been said, I take it for granted, as a fact not to be disputed, that the state, in all its acts, is to be accounted a moral and responsible agent, as much as any individual that is a subject of it; and that, although not under law to man, the supreme power, or organ of the state, is under law to God. I take it for granted, further, that in consequence of this responsibility to God, the state is bound, as the first and chief of its duties, to own His will, as embodied in the form of a supernatural revelation from Him, and in its national capacity, to recognise the authority and the Word of God as its law. And now, with an inspired revelation from God in its hands, what is it that the state learns as to its own interests and duties? It learns, in the first place, the intimate and indissoluble connection between the interests of civil society and the interests of true religion; and that to promote the wellbeing, or, rather, to insure the existence of the state, it is necessary to call in the aid of powers and influences which the state has not in itself. It finds, that what is awanting in civil society for accomplishing the very end of its own existence, the Gospel alone can supply; and that for the state to dismiss, as a matter foreign to it, the religious instruction and spiritual wellbeing of the people at large, is to forego the main instrumentality which God has put into its hands for securing the authority of law, for promoting the ends of civil government, for protecting

the rights and furthering the peace of society. All this is too plain to need illustration. Without *some* religion, no society on earth, it is admitted by all parties, could exist at all; and without the *true* religion, no society can exist happily. Law would cease to be enforced, if it had to trust to punishment alone for its authority, without any higher motive to secure obedience to it; and justice between man and man could not be carried into effect, if it had no hold upon the conscience and the moral sense of a nation. And can it be alleged that religion is a matter with which states, as such, have no right to intermeddle, when it in reality forms the main and only secure foundation on which the authority of states rests,—the only sanction sufficient to enforce right and to deter from wrong in a community,—the only force strong enough to insure obedience and respect for law,—the only bond that can bind together the discordant elements of human society, and give peace between man and man? To assert that it is no duty of the civil magistrate to care for the religion of the people, is nothing less than to assert that he is at liberty to forego the chief or only certain stay of his own authority, and to disregard what is essential to his own existence or wellbeing. If religion be the great and indispensable cement of human society, then the magistrate is bound, by a regard to his own interests, and for the sake of the grand objects for which a state exists at all, to make the care of religion one of the first duties he has to discharge towards his people.

IV. The fourth position that I lay down is, that the state is bound, by a regard to the Church, as God's ordinance for good, to countenance it, and, so far as it is in its power, to advance its interests.

The responsibility of the civil magistrate is not limited to what respects his own being or wellbeing. He finds, from the revealed will of God, that there is another society of Divine appointment, co-ordinate with the state, but different from it in its nature and in its powers. He learns that the great aim of this society is to advance the interests of the Gospel among men, and to promote the cause of truth and righteousness in the world. He recognises the visible Church of Christ as an institute appointed by Him for promoting His purposes of grace on earth, by means purely spiritual, and within a province altogether distinct from that of the state. In this separate character and

province, assigned by God to the Church and the state respectively, the civil magistrate is able to see the ground laid for co-operation between the two, without the risk of interference and collision. In the common ends which in some respects they contemplate or promote together, he acknowledges their mutual adaptation the one to the other, as friends and allies. Further still, in the fact that they are both ordinances of God, equally appointed by Him, and equally responsible to Him, the civil magistrate is able to see that they have duties one to another in the way of promoting each other's interests as fellow-workers in the same Master's service. More especially because Scripture assigns to the Church and state jurisdiction and provinces separate and apart, the civil magistrate will see that there is no danger of interference or conflict in entering into right and friendly alliance with the Church, and lending to it his countenance within its own sphere.

Such, unquestionably, will be the light in which the civil magistrate cannot but regard his obligation to God in reference to the Church as God's ordinance, when the Word of God is taken as the rule of duty in the matter. And what remains for him but to ask in what respects, consistently with the character and interests of the civil society on the one hand, and with the nature and welfare of the ecclesiastical society on the other, the state can be instrumental in promoting the cause of the Church? That there are ways in which the state may discharge its obligations to the Church, without sacrificing or encroaching upon the true character and essential rights of either, can hardly admit of a question. The state may give the protection of law to the Church in freely exercising its function as a teacher of Divine truth, and may embody its confession of doctrine in the national statute book. The state may recognise the Sabbath as a day set apart for worship and sacredness, and throw around the rest of the Sabbath the fence of a legal acknowledgment. The state may furnish out of the national resources pecuniary aid for upholding Gospel ordinances, and providing such an endowment for Gospel ministers, as may secure that they be set apart wholly to their office of ministering in sacred things. This last service the state can discharge, in so far as the resources of the nation may permit, and the true welfare of the Church itself allow. And in doing all this, the state would not overstep the limits of its office,

but rather be acquitting itself of its duty to God, whose ordinance the Church is, and whose will it is that the interests of His Church should be furthered by every competent and available means. In no respect would there be here any encroachment on the liberties of the Church, or any prejudice done to its spiritual character and prerogatives. On the contrary, there is nothing in all this but what is imperatively demanded from the state as a duty done to God on behalf of God's ordinance, the Church.

V. The fifth position that I lay down is, that the duty of the state thus to recognise, and, in so far as circumstances permit, to endow the Church, is undeniably countenanced by the whole tenor of Scripture.

It is a striking fact, in confirmation of the views already laid down, that the only form of civil polity ever framed and established by God Himself should stand markedly in connection with the Church of God; and that although many of the circumstances attending the alliance of Church and state among the Jews were peculiar to that people, yet the alliance itself cannot be regarded as ceremonial or peculiar, but must be held as intimating the Divine will as to the lawfulness of such a connection. Add to this fact that, beyond the case of the Jews, we have express examples in Scripture of the countenance given by pecuniary support, and otherwise, to the Church of God by heathen magistrates, and the deed so done sanctioned by the approbation of God. Still further, this evidence of the Divine sanction given to the support and recognition of the Church by the state might be very greatly augmented by a consideration of those predictions in regard to the future or millennial state of the Church, in which kings and kingdoms are especially represented as in the latter days bringing their gold and their honour unto it, and becoming the great instruments of promoting its spiritual interests. Nor is the doctrine of the duty of the state to recognise and aid the Church invalidated by the absence of an express command in the New Testament Scriptures, confirmatory of the duty as announced in the Old. On the contrary, the absence of an express *prohibition* repealing the law, and superseding the principles acted on in Old Testament times, is the strongest of all evidence that the doctrine and duty remain the same as before. The circumstances of the Christian Church before the canon of Scripture was closed,

are sufficient to account for the absence of any express precept there, bearing on the duty of the civil magistrate to countenance and endow the Christian society. But the circumstances of the primitive Church will not account for the absence of an express prohibition repealing the law of the Old Testament on the subject, had that law been really intended to be superseded or set aside as regards the Christian Church. The very fact of the total silence of the New Testament in regard to any such repeal is, in the circumstances, the strongest confirmation of the express countenance given in the Old to the right and duty of the state to enter into friendly alliance with the Church.

The testimony of Scripture, then, seems to be decisive of the question, and rightly to shut up the whole argument. If, as we have endeavoured to demonstrate, the state is a moral agent, responsible directly to God; if, in virtue of that responsibility, the state be bound, like every other agent in his own place, to receive and submit to the revealed will of God, when made known to it; if the state, by a regard to its own existence and welfare, is imperatively called upon to promote the religious interests of its subjects; if, by a regard to the Church, as the ordinance of God, the state lie under an obligation, in so far as is in its power, to advance its wellbeing,—the inference would seem unavoidable, that it is the duty of the state to seek a friendly alliance with the Church. It is not possible to avoid this conclusion, unless there can be produced, in contradiction to all such arguments, an express prohibition of God forbidding such an alliance as incompetent, and explicitly exempting the state from the duty that otherwise would lie upon it. But instead of any such exception being made in the case of the state, as alone of all the creatures of God exempted from allegiance to Him, and licensed to disown Him,—instead of any such prohibition laid upon the civil governments of the world, forbidding them to do what all else are commanded to do,—to bring their homage and help to the Church of Christ,—we find the very opposite to be the case. We find the whole tenor of Scripture bearing testimony to the duty and responsibility of the state in the matter, and lending not a contradiction but a confirmation to the dictates of nature and reason, which declare that nations and communities, like the individuals that compose them, are the subjects

of Christ, and as such bound to bring their honour and glory to His Church.[1]

SEC. IV. THE NECESSITY OF THEIR CONNECTION.

We have already had occasion to advert to the important distinction to be taken between the duty of the state in acknowledging and recognising the true religion and the true Church, and the duty of the state in maintaining and endowing the Church. The one of these is a duty binding at all times on the civil magistrate, as the responsible servant of God; the other is a duty dependent on the social and political circumstances of the community at the time. And the true relation of the Church to the state is to be determined by a consideration of the question of the lawfulness and duty of the civil magistrate's owning and recognising the Christian Church, not by a consideration of the inferior and far subordinate question of the right or obligation of the civil magistrate to endow the Christian Church. This latter point, —or the right and office of the state as regards the pecuniary support and establishment of religion,—is not only in itself a secondary question to the office and duty of the state to recognise the true religion, but ought also in some respects to be determined by other and different considerations. A regard to the pecuniary interest of the nation,—to the state of religious parties,—to the political power of the state,—may make it lawful or unlawful, expedient or inexpedient, for the civil magistrate to alienate the public funds of the nation to the support of the Church. But although in many discussions this part of the subject has obtained an undue prominence in the argument,[2] the turning point of the controversy between the friends and the enemies of civil establishments of religion must be the prior and far more important

[1] [M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, pp. 144–150. *Statement*, pp. 10–29. 77–153. Apollonius, *Jus Majest. circa Sacra*, Pars i. cap. ii. pp. 28–32, 44–46; cap. v. pp. 83–91. Voetius, *Politica Ecclesiastica*, Pars i. lib. i. Tract ii. cap. 2–4.]

[2] ["We shall assume, as the basis of our definition of a religious establishment, or as the essential property by which to specify and characterize it, *a sure legal provision for the expense of its ministrations.* . . . It is this which forms the essence of an Establishment; and, as such, must be singled out from among all the other accessories wherewith it may happen to be variegated. This idea of an Establishment may or may not imply what is commonly meant by a connection between the Church and the state."—Chalmers, *Lectures on Church Establishments*, i. 6; *Works*, vol. xvii. p. 195.]

question of the right and duty of the state to acknowledge and profess the true religion, without reference to the matter of its pecuniary support at all. A friendly alliance between the state and the Church, between the civil magistrate and the true religion, is entirely different from, and not to be confounded with, the endowment of the Church out of the national resources.[1]

The argument to which we propose now to address ourselves is, that the ordinance of God for the temporal wellbeing of the community, and the ordinance of God for the spiritual wellbeing of the community, are, from their essential character, so related to each other, that there must unavoidably be a connection, either friendly, or otherwise, between them; that the civil element and the religious element are so interwoven in the very constitution of human society, that they must necessarily tend either to establish or destroy each other; and that unless the Church and state are to be regarded as enemies, hostile to each other's existence, they must be united as friends, aiding and promoting each other's welfare. There can be no such thing as neutrality between the two. The Church in its relation to the state can be accounted in no other light than as an ally leagued with the state for its good, or as an aggressor encroaching upon its rights, and dangerous to its supreme authority. The state in its relation to the Church must be regarded either as the Church's friend and protector, or else as an adversary, secret or avowed. There can, from the very nature of the case, be no alternative. The two societies stand so intimately and vitally related to each other, that the civil magistrate, if he does not ally himself to religion as a friend, will unavoidably be brought into conflict and collision with it as an enemy. He must account it the first and best of all the aids he has in securing the objects of his government; or, if he views it otherwise and treats it otherwise, he will be forced into the position of being its oppressor or its victim.

In making these statements, I of course assume that the question of the connection of the Church and state is not to be restricted to that of the endowment or non-endowment of the Christian society by a nation. The question is to be argued on the wider and more comprehensive footing of the duty of the state to recog-

[1] [For a further discussion of this point, and for the author's views of the doctrine of the Confession of Faith upon the subject, see an extract from a letter written by him shortly before his death, and given in Appendix B.]

nise and acknowledge the true religion, or not to recognise and acknowledge it; and, viewed in this larger and juster sense, my argument, I repeat, is, that from the very nature of the case there is a necessity laid upon the state to own and recognise the existence of religion, in such a sense that, if it refuse to do so, either the state itself or the Church, or, rather, both at once, must fatally suffer. The civil element and the religious element are so bound together in the very constitution of human society, that they may unite together within it as friends, but they cannot exist together within it as neutrals. If within the borders of the same community they are not allied together in friendship to a certain extent, they will be inevitably forced into the attitude of mutual antagonism. The fundamental maxim of the Voluntary theory, that "the state, as the state, has nothing to do with religion,"[1] is a principle which, from the very necessity of the case, can never be realized. The state *must* have to do with religion, and that in the way, if not of friendly co-operation and consent, then of hostility and opposition. If it were possible for the state in any country to disown all connection of a friendly kind with religion, natural and revealed, the inevitable tendency would be, either for the want of religion to destroy the state, or for the state to destroy religion.

Let me endeavour, by pointing out certain matters with which both the civil and the spiritual power are concerned, to demonstrate the necessity of a friendly and harmonious connection between religion and civil government,—the necessity, I mean, in such a sense, that the disowning of all such connection must inevitably lead to the injury or destruction of either the Church or the state.

I. In the first place, let me refer to the case of an oath, which is the bond and seal of human society.

An oath is more than a civil covenant or engagement: it is a religious one, superinduced upon the civil. In the use of an

[1] "I answer explicitly to the question, What is the magistrate's province in regard to religion? that *his true and legitimate province is to have no province at all*. Religion has authority over him as an individual, for same as it has over all; but in it, or over it, or over his subjects in might that pertains to it, his authority is null. If he exercises it, it is the exercise of power without right. . . . In all that relates to religion, the command of Him whose exclusive dominion is over the conscience and the heart, would be, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath.'"—Wardlaw, *National Church Establishments Examined*, pp. 191, 192; London 1839.

oath, the parties who employ it call in the aid of the solemnities and the sacredness of religion, to give strength to the obligation of a promise; they ratify the promise by an appeal to God to witness its terms, and to judge the breach or fulfilment of it. The central truth of all religion, in which all professors of religion, whether natural or revealed, concur,—the truth, namely, of the existence of a God, the omniscient Witness and the Almighty Judge of men's conduct and words,—is summoned to the aid of man, when he would enter into any vital and important engagement with his fellow-man; and an appeal to that great and mysterious Being who is above, is interposed and added as the seal and confirmation of the engagement.

Now, how stands the fundamental principle of the Voluntary school in relation to the use of oaths in civil transactions? Is it true, or *can* it be true in any sense, that the state, as the state, has "nothing to do with religion," and is debarred from making use in any manner of the truths and obligations of religion? Does the civil magistrate overstep the limits of his office, and enter within a province forbidden to him, when he calls to himself the aid of religion, and makes an oath, sanctified and surrounded as it is by the solemnities of religion, to be the bond and the guard of civil society? Or is it the very duty of the magistrate to disown all connection with any form or profession of faith, and to discharge from every transaction of civil life with which he stands officially connected, the use and obligation of religious oaths? The very attempt to do so would itself be an act of national suicide,—a return from organized society to a state of nature,—the establishment of misrule and anarchy by law. Deny or disown the religious obligation of an oath, and you unloose the bond of civilised society, and resolve it once more into its original elements. The whole structure of human society, in so far as it differs from a state of nature, rests upon the foundation of an oath. Its every relation, from the highest to the lowest, is sealed with the seal of a religious vow. In civilised life, and in all its offices and transactions, the last appeal that can be made is an appeal to God; and, short of the dissolution of human society and a resort once more to the law of brute force, "an oath for confirmation is, with men, an end of all strife." The covenant between the monarch and the subject, because it can appeal to no higher law, appeals to an

oath, and is ratified by the solemnity of a religious vow; and the duty of the prince and the allegiance of the people are both confirmed by a reference to God. Those who administer and those who execute law, alike discharge the duties of their office under the obligation, not merely of a civil but of a religious engagement: the judge and the magistrate equally sit in judgment under the responsibility of an appeal to God. The appeal to justice in matters of wrong done or injury sustained between man and man, is made ultimately to rest on the same solemn foundation; the evidence in witness-bearing is only evidence in so far as it is confirmed by an appeal to God as the Witness and the Judge; and the life and death of man, his property, and his dearest civil rights, are adjudged away or ratified to him in virtue of an oath. In short, the relation between the throne and the subject, the office of judge and magistrate, the award of law and justice, the right of life and property, the privilege of peace and order in human society, directly or indirectly rest upon the obligation of an oath, and an appeal to God, as sanctioning and sealing every other obligation. Confirmed and riveted by an oath, the relations of human society stand fast and sure; without an oath, the bonds of life are unloosed, and the fabric of national existence is unsettled to its foundations.

And now, then, shall we say that "the civil magistrate has nothing to do with religion," and that within the province of its doctrines and its institutions he is forbidden to enter? or, rather, shall we not say, that for the state to disown all connection with religion, is a thing impossible, without once more returning to the state of savage nature, and dissolving by law the compact of civilised society? There can be no alternative in the matter. With the friendly alliance of religion, and more especially with the aid of an oath, as an appeal to God, binding together all its parts, the civil estate is strong; without such alliance, and disowning the use and obligation of an oath, the civil estate is resolved into its original elements. The perilous experiment of a civil compact without the ratification of an oath has never yet been exhibited in the experience of the world; and on the evidence both of history and reason, we are warranted to say that, without an appeal to God in some shape or other, the offices of civil society were impossible. It will not do to allege against our argument, that an oath is a matter not of revealed but of natural

religion,—common to nature, and not peculiar to Christianity. This is true. But the doctrines of natural religion, as much as the truths of revealed religion, are excluded from the office of the magistrate by the Voluntary theory; and there are atheists in the world as well as deists, who, on the Voluntary hypothesis, are as much entitled to object against the recognition by the magistrate of the truths of natural religion as of the doctrines of revelation. Neither will it do to allege that an oath is a merely civil transaction, and that, as civil, the magistrate has a right to employ it. In so far it may be true that there stands connected with an oath a civil engagement as well as a religious. But it is the solemn appeal to God, as the present Witness of the truth, and the future Avenger of falsehood or breach of engagement, that forms the essence of an oath; and it is in this character that it is employed in the transactions of human society. It is the seal of God attached to the words of man,—a religious obligation superinduced upon the weakness or insufficiency of a civil engagement. There is, in short, no possibility of evading the argument. The state may enter into friendly alliance with religion, and especially may call to its aid the solemnity of an oath, in order to give security and strength to the social fabric, and so save the commonwealth; or the state may disown all connection with religion, and especially may dispense with the solemnity of an oath, as the seal of civil engagements, and so entail upon society the penalty of an insecure existence and a speedy dissolution. But civil society and religion cannot exist together upon the principle of an absolute and total separation. The disavowal of all connection with religion by the civil magistrate, and the carrying out of such a disavowal in practice, would unloose the bonds of human society; and the penalty of religion denied and rejected by the state, would be the not distant destruction of the state that did so. Without the sanction of religion, natural or revealed, and more especially without the obligation of an oath to unite together the elements of civil life, the magistrate must abdicate his functions, and declare his duties to be impossible.

II. In the second place, let us refer to the right inherent in the Church of Christ to propagate the Gospel, and make disciples in every country and nation under heaven.

This right, claimed by the Church, and belonging to her in con-

sequence of the duty enjoined by her Head, is a right of such a nature, that it cannot properly consist with the neutrality of the civil magistrate, or be recognised by any state constituted on the principle that it has nothing to do with religion. The full and free and unrestricted power to take possession of this world in the name of Christ, to the exclusion of any other form of faith and worship, is what Christianity demands: with less than this it cannot be satisfied. And yet it may well be doubted whether it be consistent with the principle and practice of absolute neutrality on the part of the state to concede this demand, or whether a toleration for the truth, founded on the theory of entire impartiality and indifference as regards truth and falsehood, is sufficient to protect the Church of Christ in its exclusive claims. The Gospel of Christ is not, like the systems of polytheism among which it was introduced at first, compatible with every other system of falsehood. It is exclusive in its character and pretensions; and demands that it be received and owned and submitted to, to the abandonment and rejection of every other faith. Christ Himself tells us that He came to send on the earth, "not peace, but a sword," not ease, but "a burning fire;"[1] and, like a sword, His Gospel divides asunder the outward and formal union of human society, and, like a fire, it kindles strife and division in the world. There is so much in the Gospel fitted to awaken the hostility of the human heart, and standing in direct opposition to the principles and practices of the world, that it cannot but act as a firebrand wherever it enters. To introduce and propagate it, therefore, in any community, tends not indirectly to excite the rage and outrage and violence of men. More than this: its first principle and first duty is that of aggression. The ministers of the Gospel claim it as a right to go into every nation, however fenced around and guarded from intrusion, and to demand an entrance in the name of Him who sent them, even although the magistrate should bid them depart from his coasts. Further still, the messengers of the Cross arrogate to themselves the title to enter into every human dwelling where a sinner is to be found,—seeking admittance in the name of the Saviour of sinners, that they may negotiate with the inhabitant in behalf of their Master, however sternly the door may be closed against them by jealousy of their errand, or hatred to their cause.

[1] Matt. x. 34; Luke xii. 49, 51.

It has been the eloquent boast of freedom in our country, that every man's house is his castle; and that, be it but a straw-built shed, open to every breath of heaven, yet fenced about by the protection and the sanction of law, there even "the king cannot and dare not enter."[1] But where the king cannot enter, there the missionary of Christ claims to be admitted; and, with a higher warrant in his hand than that of human law, bids the gates be lifted up, that with the Gospel he may enter in. And can claims and pretensions so essentially exclusive and aggressive, which belong from its very nature to Christianity, be owned and conceded by a state constituted on the principle of entire and equal indifference to truth and falsehood? Is it, in the nature of things, possible, in regard to such demands, to profess or carry out the theory of neutrality in civil legislation,—granting a licence free and full to Christianity, intolerant as it is of every other religion? Ask the Roman magistrate within whose jurisdiction the Gospel was at first preached, or the magistrate of any country not Christian within whose rule Christianity is introduced at the present day. For the first three hundred years of its existence the religion of Christ was in almost perpetual collision with the state, just on the ground that it was essentially a missionary and an exclusive religion, that it would not, and could not, exist in peace alongside of any other faith, that its temples must stand alone, and its Deity find no place in the Pantheon. Nor has the essential character of Christianity altered since the days of Nero and Diocletian. Upon the principle of complete indifference to truth and to falsehood, it were difficult to argue or assert that any government could or ought to protect, or give place by civil permission to, a religion framed upon a principle so intolerant, and proceeding in a manner so aggressive. With no other right to toleration than the right which falsehood equally has, it were a matter of question whether the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus, and the full claims of an exclusive kind which it makes, ought to be granted by any state. At all events, waiving the question of right, we know that, in the history of the world, it has been found impossible in point of fact for any state not Christian to grant them; and that, in the person of a magistrate not a friend

[1] [Lord Chatham, quoted by Dr. Chalmers in a well-known passage in his *Lectures on Church Establishments*. Hanna, *Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers*, vol. iv. pp. 39, 44–46.]

to the Gospel, we have, from the very necessity of the case, to deal with an enemy and a persecutor,—whether that magistrate be a philosopher, like Pliny, or "the father of his people," like Marcus Antoninus.[1] Judging from the nature of the Gospel and of human society together, or judging from the actual history of the facts, we may lay it down, as a position not to be controverted, that when the civil magistrate does not own the truth and recognise it as a friend, then he will view it and treat it as an enemy. The state cannot be neutral; if it is not professedly Christian, it will, directly or indirectly, be the persecutor of Christianity.

It is not enough to allege in reply, that Christianity may claim, and rightfully claim, the same measure of protection as every other form of faith or unbelief; and that, in the toleration granted equally to truth and to falsehood by the civil magistrate, —who, upon the Voluntary theory, is equally indifferent to both, —the Gospel is secure. It may be fairly questioned whether this measure of protection or toleration would cover and include all that Christianity, as the one truth of God, has a right to demand, even were it fully and equally carried out. At least this much is certain, that our Lord never claimed toleration for His kingdom and truth upon the footing that it had an equal right, and no more than equal, with falsehood, to be owned and protected by Cæsar. Nay, our Lord never claimed toleration for His Gospel upon any other ground than that it was *the* truth, and not falsehood, and had a right, which falsehood had not, to be not only tolerated, but also owned and recognised and submitted to by Cæsar. But, apart from this argument altogether, history teaches the lesson but too plainly, from the record of the past, that where a civil magistrate does not recognise the Gospel, there he never can even protect the profession and demands of the Gospel. The theory of full toleration, on the principle of absolute and even-handed indifference on the part of the state alike to truth and falsehood, is a mere theory, and nothing more. It is impossible to carry it out fully and fairly into practice. The magistrate

[1] ["No emperor after the reign of Nero," says Mosheim, "inflicted greater evils and calamities on the Christians than this eminently wise Marcus Antoninus: nor was there any emperor under whom more apologies for them were drawn up, of which those by Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tatian, are still extant."—*Institutes of Eccles. Hist.* Cent. ii. chap. ii. 5. Compare Milman's chapter on "Christianity, and Marcus Aurelius the Philosopher."—*History of Christianity*, Lond. 1840, vol. ii. pp. 159–198.]

himself has a human heart within him, which, if it does not own and love the truth of God, will assuredly deny it and hate it; and if not decidedly the friend, he will be decidedly the enemy, of the Gospel.

III. In the third place, I would refer to the law of marriage as another of those cases which illustrate the general position, that the civil and religious elements are so connected together in human society, that where they do not meet and unite in friendship and mutual co-operation, they must inevitably tend to the serious or fatal injury of one or the other.

Marriage is one of those institutions which, although not of grace but of nature, is yet adopted into the system of Christianity, and regulated by the rules which Christianity has laid down. The law of marriage has its origin in nature, and not in revelation; and yet the duties and rights connected with it, together with their exact nature and limits, are matters with which revelation deals. In so far as these involve moral or religious duties, we are to seek in the Bible for the code of law by which they are prescribed and determined. But marriage is, in another sense, a civil matter, coming under the province of the ordinary magistrate, and necessarily requiring to be dealt with in the way of civil enactment. There are civil rights intimately connected with it, in such a manner that the state cannot avoid the duty of legislating in regard to it, and regulating them by positive statutes and rules. In short, the institution of marriage is to be viewed in two lights,—either as a moral observance, falling to be regulated by the law of Scripture, or as a civil observance, falling to be regulated by the law of the state. And with this twofold character which it sustains, and this twofold legislation to which in every civilised and constituted society professing Christianity it is subjected, how, it may be asked, is a collision between the spiritual and the civil enactments on the subject—fraught, as it inevitably would be, with deadly consequence to the peace, if not the existence, of human society—to be avoided or prevented? If the state recognise the Bible as the Word of God, and the law of the Bible as the law of God, then it will take that law as the guiding principle for its own legislation, and make the enactments of the magistrate in regard to marriage coincident with the enactments of Scripture. But if the state do not recognise the Bible as the Word of God, there can be no security that its regulations

shall not come into conflict with the regulations of Scripture as regards the institution of marriage, in such a manner as to put in peril not only the peace and purity of domestic life, but also through these the highest and holiest interests of human society. The ordinance of the family lies at the very foundation of civil society. It is the unit of combination around which the wider and more public relations of civil life associate themselves. Destroy or unhinge the domestic ordinances, unloose or unsettle the family bond, and no tie will be left holy enough or strong enough to bind up the broken and disjointed elements of human life. And yet, unless there be on the part of the state a distinct acknowledgment of the Word of God as the law to which its own laws must be conformed, there can be no security against the danger of the enactments of civil society on this vital point running counter to the appointment of God. The degrees of relationship or consanguinity within which marriage is valid or invalid,—the terms on which it is to be contracted or dissolved,—the rights which it confers on children, and the claims of succession,—all these are questions that fall to be determined both by the law of Scripture and the laws of the state, and any difference or conflict in regard to which must tend to unsettle the very foundation of human society. From the very nature and necessity of the case, if the state is not here at one with religion, it must be a difference deeply, if not fundamentally, injurious to the one or the other.

IV. In the fourth place, I would refer to the case of the Sabbath, as another instance illustrative of the general position, that when religion and the civil government do not meet and act in harmony, the difference must be to the fatal injury of the one or other.

Here, too, the civil and the spiritual element in society are so nearly and closely related, that, unless they unite, they cannot co-exist with full and unfettered action on either side. In the case of the weekly rest of the Sabbath, as God imposes on every man the obligation to observe and sanctify it, so by that very obligation He confers on every man the right to demand at the hands of his fellow-men the free and undisturbed use and enjoyment of the day, as a day to be exempted from the claims of human society, because already claimed by God. This is the warrant which every Christian has to ask that he shall have power

and liberty given him to use the day for the service of God,—a power and liberty which, if they are not to be at the mercy of other men, must be guarded by the recognition and protection of law. The Sabbath, in this respect, differs from other duties appointed to the Christian. These are for the most part private, and peculiar to the individual; the Sabbath is a social and public ordinance. The former may be observed by individuals as such, without regard to the observance of them by their fellow-men; the Sabbath cannot be generally or completely observed without the concurrence and consent of others. It is well-nigh impossible, therefore, for an individual to keep the Sabbath as it ought to be kept, without the aid and advantage of the state making the at least outward observance of the Sabbath rest a national thing. No doubt it is possible, in one sense of the term, for every man not actually under physical restraint to cease from labour on the Sabbath, while others persist in it, and to sanctify the day, while others devote it to their ordinary occupations or pleasures. But a keeping of the Sabbath like this involves such sacrifices to be made, and such obstacles to be overcome, that it would virtually and practically amount to a prohibition of keeping it at all. The Christian slave in the early ages of the Gospel could not, generally speaking, have kept the Sabbath at all, unless in those rare cases where he was, like Onesimus with Philemon, not so much a slave as a brother beloved in the Gospel. And the Christian who, in modern days, is hardly less a slave, for the sake of his subsistence, to unremitting and constant toil from day to day, with an unprotected Sabbath, and the unprincipled competition of others willing to devote the Sabbath to labour and to gain, would feel himself scarcely in better circumstances for observing its rest and its duties, than the Greek or the Roman bondsman in the days of Paul. Without the protection of law, enforcing the rest of one day in seven, the Sabbath in an irreligious society could hardly be kept even by Christians.[1] Yet it is only because the civil government to that extent recognises the law of Scripture, and throws around the Sabbath the fence of its authority, that we have a day of weekly rest and sacredness secured to us at all. In itself it is no civil right, but a religious one. The warrant for the weekly Sabbath is no human authority or human con-

[1] [*Lectures on Civil Establishments of Religion*, Edin. 1835, Lec. v. pp. 1–44.]

venience, but the express command of God. The state may recognise this authority, and, acting in concert with religion, may sanction the Sabbath by law, and in doing so be at one with religion. But a state acting on the principle of indifference alike to truth and error, to the religion of God and the falsehoods of man, must necessarily disown any such appointment; and divorced from Christianity, or disavowing it, must afford another illustration of the general position, that when religion and civil government do not co-operate and unite, the separation must be fatal to the highest interests of the one or the other.[1]

What, now, is the conclusion of the whole argument? We reason at present with those who acknowledge the authority of God's Word,—who confess that religion on the one hand, and civil government on the other, are alike and equally His ordinance, —and that, as such, they cannot rightfully be hostile or destructive of one another. And our argument is, that neutrality between the two is impossible—declared and proved to be impossible both by reason and experience. There is but a single alternative presented to us in the matter of the relation of the Church and the state. They cannot be neutral, but they may be separated;

[1] [A rather remarkable instance of the working of the extreme Voluntary principle in connection with the question of Sabbath legislation, is to be found in the case of Dr. Wardlaw. On the ground of his famous maxim, that "the true and legitimate province of the civil magistrate in regard to religion is *to have no province at all*," Dr. Wardlaw might have been expected to object to all civil enactments whatsoever, having for their aim to protect the rest and sacredness of the Lord's day. His deep and well-founded sense of the importance of that aim, however, was at first strong enough to make him shrink from what seems a strictly logical conclusion from his own principle; and in his well-known and valuable *Discourses on the Sabbath*, he attempts to save himself from it by drawing a distinction between the *secular* and the *religious* aspect of the Sabbath. In respect to the former of these, civil legislation may, he thinks, be admitted; with the latter the magistrate can have nothing to do.—Discourse ix., Glasgow 1832, pp. 268-280.

On this point the remarks of Wardlaw's accomplished biographer, Dr. Lindsay Alexander, seem perfectly unanswerable: "The author's reasoning is singularly inconclusive. Obviously his premises are too narrow, or his conclusions too wide. . . . Nothing seems more certain, than that if you abstract from the sacred—that is, the religiously imperative—character of the Sabbath, you must place it legislatively on the same level with any other civil holiday; and in that case all that the Legislature can do is to name the day for a holiday, leaving the community to observe it or not as they please, and to spend it in any recreations that shall be most agreeable to them. When the magistrate, professing to stand on purely secular ground, attempts to do more—attempts to do as much as Dr. Wardlaw says in this discourse he ought to do—no wonder that the people should become rebellious. . . . This sort of legislation plainly will never do. Either the magistrate must not meddle with Sabbath

and by the separation they inevitably become hostile, if not destructive, to each other; or they may be united, and by the union they become the allies and the friends of each other. And with this as the only possible alternative, the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that since they are both ordinances of God, and as such not intended to injure or destroy each other, they must have been designed to co-operate and unite.[1]

SEC. V. THE SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHURCH, AND THE PRINCIPLES OF TOLERATION.

We have now briefly gone over the main grounds, both in reason and Scripture, on which the lawfulness, the duty, the necessity of some friendly understanding and concert between the Church and the state may be satisfactorily maintained. The principles laid down on this subject have been objected against from various quarters and for different reasons. But perhaps the chief objections that have been brought against the doctrine of the lawfulness and duty of civil establishments of religion may be resolved into these two,—namely, that any connection between

observance at all, or he must take his stand on the *religious* character of the day; and just as he forbids polygamy, or the marrying of one's sister, or the holding of slaves, or perjury, or many things besides, on the ground that God has denounced them, he must forbid, under such penalties as he shall see meet, all open violation, by traffic or amusement, of a day which God has said shall be kept as a day of rest for man and for beast. When the legislator takes his ground on this principle, he will have the conscience of the nation on his side, and if his enactments be wise and just he will find public feeling support him; but if otherwise, he is only likely to produce confusion and riot by his interference."—*Memoirs of Wardlaw*, Edinr. 1856, pp. 295, 296.

Dr. Alexander does not notice, however, what is well worthy of remark, that upon this point Wardlaw afterwards changed his opinion under the pressure of the argumentative difficulties by which it is beset. In his *Systematic Theology*, although still with some lingering doubts, he takes up the much more consistent position of thoroughgoing Voluntaryism, and, in entire harmony with his grand principle of the civil magistrate having nothing whatever to do with religion, insists that there should be no authoritative Sabbath legislation whatsoever. "I am more and more inclined to think," says Dr. Wardlaw, and I believe with perfect justice, "that consistent anti-establishment principles will hardly admit of a halt short of this point."—*Systematic Theology*, Edinr. 1857, vol. iii. xxii. pp. 449–456.]

[1] Symington, *Messiah the Prince; or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ*, 2d ed. chap. ix. pp. 318–353. [For a note by the author on the rise and growth of Voluntaryism, and on the recent recoil among the advocates of this theory from the extreme views of Dr. Wardlaw, and others of its most eminent defenders, see Appendix C.]

the Church and the state is inconsistent with the spiritual independence of the Church, or inconsistent with the principles of toleration. It may be of some importance to consider the subject of the relation of the Church to the state in reference more particularly to these two objections. Is it true, on the one hand, that a connection between religion and civil government unavoidably leads to the sacrifice of the spiritual independence and power that belong to the Church of Christ as His free kingdom?[1] Or is it true, on the other hand, that such a connection is inconsistent with the liberty of thought and belief and action that properly appertain to every man as a member of the state? In other words, can the balance between the claims of the spiritual and civil society be in any case so equally adjusted and maintained, as to avoid the sacrifice either of the freedom that belongs to the Church, or of the liberty that belongs to the state? The answer to that question will lead us to consider, *in the first place*, the bearing of civil establishments of religion on the spiritual independence of the Church; and *in the second place*, their bearing on the principles of toleration.

I. Are civil establishments of religion necessarily inconsistent with the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ?

That, in point of fact, the civil magistrate has often invaded the prerogatives of Christ, and encroached upon the liberties of His Church, cannot be denied. The mere politician, whose only aim has been the temporal aggrandizement of his office, has often succeeded in making the Church the tool of his ambition, and in using it as the engine to promote his political ends. And the mere Churchman, on the other hand, whose main desire has been civil honour or influence, has often consented to barter away the spiritual character and freedom of the Church in return for state endowment and support. But there is nothing in the nature of a friendly alliance between the Church and state incompatible with the independence of either, any more than there is anything

[1] ["So long as a state-religion exists," says Mr. Marshall, "religion itself must suffer; the ordinances of God cannot be kept pure and entire; Divine things and human, sacred things and profane, as opposite in their nature as light and darkness, as incapable of uniting as iron and miry clay, must be blended into one mass; the kingdom of Christ must be a kingdom of this world; His sanctuary a polluted sanctuary, trodden down of the Gentiles; His spouse an unchaste spouse, married to another husband, in the bonds of that unholy wedlock 'whose dower is corruption, whose offspring is hypocrisy.'" —*Eccles. Establishments further Considered*, p. iv.]

in a friendly alliance between two states incompatible with the independence of each. There is nothing inconsistent with the spiritual freedom and independence of the Church in its connection with the state. The state may indeed demand the sacrifice, to a greater or less extent, of the spiritual powers and liberty of the Church, as the price of its countenance and protection; and in doing this the state trespasses into a province not lawfully or scripturally belonging to it. But, on the other hand, the state may make no such demand, but, leaving the Christian Church with its powers of a spiritual kind untouched, and its freedom unfettered, may add to these the benefit of civil recognition and endowment; and in doing so, both the Church and state would be acting within their respective provinces, and acting aright. Whatever historically may be the fact as to the frequent encroachment by the civil power on the spiritual independence of the Church when they have been connected, there is nothing in the connection itself that necessarily leads to it; and it is quite possible for a Church to enter into alliance with the state without sacrificing one article in its Confession of Faith, or one jot or tittle of its spiritual prerogatives. The unfettered action of a Christian Church, in all its matters of doctrine, and worship, and discipline, is perfectly consistent with its recognition by the state, where the state recognises not only the Church itself, but also the freedom of the Church in spiritual things.

But the objection urged by the disciples of the Voluntary principle is occasionally put in a somewhat different form. It is objected, not that an alliance between the Church and state necessarily implies the surrender by the Church of her spiritual powers and freedom in return for protection and endowment, but that, in setting up a Church at all, the civil magistrate makes the Church the mere creature of the state, dependent for its existence and for all its powers on his enactments. It is objected that, in sanctioning a Confession of Faith, or establishing a Church by law, the civil magistrate is making both the faith and the Church the mere product of civil law. Now such an objection obviously confounds together two authorities, the one of which is supreme, and the other of which is subordinate in the matter. When the subordinate authority lends its sanction to the appointments of the supreme, so far from superseding or denying the supreme authority, it expressly owns and does homage to it. It is for

God to lay down the doctrines to be believed, — the form of government to be adopted,—the discipline to be maintained by the Christian Church; and when the state, in addition to this Divine appointment, lends to them the sanction of civil appointment also, it is because of their previous Divine authority, and in acknowledgment of it, that the state does so. The recognition of the Church by the civil magistrate is not the creation of the Church by the civil magistrate; on the contrary, his recognition of it proceeds upon the acknowledgment that it existed by Divine authority and institution before. The sanction lent by the state to the doctrine which the Church holds and professes, is not the same thing as the state dictating the doctrine which the Church must hold and profess; on the contrary, it proceeds upon the principle that the doctrine has been previously appointed and dictated by God, and is an express homage to it as such. In such a case the appointment by God, and the recognition of that appointment by man, are two things not inconsistent with each other, but perfectly compatible. The recognition by the state is itself an explicit confession of the strongest kind that the Church has been previously instituted and appointed by God, and that, in consequence of this Divine origin, it is independent of the state.

If, then, a friendly connection between the Church and state is not incompatible with the spiritual freedom and independence of the former, there can be no reason on this account for repudiating such a connection. But more than this. The question may well arise, whether the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ is not *better* secured upon the theory of an alliance between the Church and state than upon the Voluntary principle. It may, I think, be safely argued, that the state which recognises the Church as an ordinance of God, and enters into connection with it as such, is less likely to invade its freedom or independence, than the state which, acting on the Voluntary principle, refuses to recognise the Church's Divine appointment, and regards it with a favour neither more nor less than what it shows to any other system of religious error or delusion. I do not speak, of course, at present of any such connection between the Church and state as involves the sacrifice to the smallest extent of her principles or independence in the very terms of it. I speak of an alliance adjusted and formed upon principles that

acknowledge the respective authority and essential independence of Church and state. And the question comes to be, whether the spiritual independence of the Church is not better provided for and secured at the hands of a state which owns its authority and claims to be from God, and therefore enters into friendly alliance with it, than it would be at the hands of a state which knows no difference between what is human and what is Divine in the matter, and therefore repudiates all such alliance. There is nothing in the mere fact of separation between the Church and state that can secure the spiritual independence of the former against the invasion of the latter. The state, whether allied to the Church or disowning such alliance, *must* deal with religion and with the institutions of religion, in so far as these bear on the interests of the commonwealth; and the civil magistrate is thus unavoidably forced into a position in which, in the use or abuse of his authority, he may be oftentimes tempted to interfere with the spiritual freedom and rights of the Church. History tells us that the separation of the Church from the state is no barrier whatsoever against such encroachments; and, on the contrary, that there have never been awanting reasons of state policy, or motives of political expediency, for causing the civil magistrate to look with jealousy on the Church of Christ, and to impose upon its freedom the restraints or the severities of law. And on which of the two principles—that of the civil establishment of the true religion, or that of the indifference of the state to all religions—will the spiritual rights and independence of the Church of Christ be most likely to be practically acknowledged and secured? Will it be when the state owns the Church to be of God, and confesses its spiritual powers and prerogatives to be from Him? Or will it be when the state knows not whether the Church be from God or from man, and is equally indifferent to whether its claims are of Divine or human origin? The very acknowledgment by the state that the Church is the institute of God must itself prove, in so far as the acknowledgment is sincere, a security against the unjust invasion of its prerogatives; and the confession implied in a civil recognition of it, that it is more than a mere human or voluntary society, will protect it, to the extent that that confession is practically carried out, against wanton encroachment upon its independence. On the contrary, the denial by the state of the

peculiar character of the Church as of Divine authority, or the entire indifference to its claims though it were,—the practical disavowal by the civil magistrate of all regard to the Church of Christ, any more or further than to any other society, voluntary and human, to be found within the commonwealth,—must leave it exposed to be invaded and trampled upon in its dearest rights at the dictate of state policy or the temptation of political expediency. Let the civil magistrate be brought to acknowledge that the Church is the very Church of God; and this acknowledgment, if honestly made and fairly acted on, will set bounds around its spiritual freedom, which he will feel it to be unlawful to break through. Let the civil magistrate, on the contrary, be brought to confess no difference between the Church of God and any human and voluntary society instituted for secular purposes, and all restraint will be taken away, whereby he might have been prevented from dealing with the Church of Christ as any other society, and making its independence subordinate to reasons of state. So far is it from being true that the spiritual independence of the Church is sacrificed, from the necessity of the case, to a state alliance, and its freedom secured by separation from the state, that the very reverse is nearer to the truth. In so far as the Church, as a Divine ordinance, is owned and recognised by the civil magistrate, to that extent he has a reason, and a strong one, for respecting its spiritual independence. In so far as the Church is regarded by the civil magistrate as merely on a level with any voluntary society, and to be tolerated and protected as far as and no further than any such society, to that extent he is deprived of the strongest motive for respecting its rights, and is tempted on every national emergency or party crisis that may occur, to sacrifice those rights to considerations of state policy or interest.

II. Are civil establishments of religion necessarily inconsistent with the principles of toleration?

The doctrine involved in such establishments, according to the opinion of the disciples of the Voluntary system, implies or unavoidably leads to persecution for conscience sake. If magistrates, as such, have a power to interfere about religion, then, it is objected, they must have a right incompatible with the duty and the privilege of private judgment,—a right to impose a certain form of faith and worship by law on their subjects, and to enforce

it under the sanction of civil pains and penalties.[1] Now, it is not true that there is anything of this kind involved in the principle that the state may justly recognise, and establish, and endow by law, a particular profession of religion. There is a distinction, and a most important one, between the power of the civil magistrate "*circa sacra*," and his power "*in sacris*;" and this distinction is greatly overlooked by those who urge the objection, that the principle of the connection between Church and state necessarily involves what is inconsistent with toleration. It is readily granted, that the power of the civil magistrate is in its proper character compulsory. It is further granted, that this power is employed in connection with the civil establishment and endowment of religion by the state. But a compulsory power exercised *about* religion, is a widely different thing from a compulsory power exercised *in* religion. The one of these is incompatible with the principles of toleration; the other of these is not. To compel a man to believe, or to profess his belief in, a certain form of religion, and to comply with a certain fashion of worship, under the threatening or infliction of civil penalties if he refuse, —this is the exercise of a compulsory power *in* religion, and is inconsistent with the principles of toleration. But to compel a man to contribute of his property to the public treasury of the state, and to apply a portion of the tax, not upon his responsibility, but upon the responsibility of the state, to the endowment of the Church, this is the exercise of a compulsory power, not *in* religion, but *about* religion, and is nowise inconsistent with the principles of toleration. To oblige a man under civil pains to conform to the Church by law established, or to punish him for dissenting from it, is without dispute a violation of the right that belongs to all to worship God according to their conscience. But to oblige a man under civil penalties to contribute his share of a general tax, part of which is appropriated by the state to the use of religion, is no violation of the rights of conscience, unless it can be held to be so for the state, in any given case, to tax an individual for an object of which his conscience does not approve. It is of no avail to plead that religion is a matter peculiar and separate from any other; and that for the state to make a man pay for

[1] [Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments further Considered*, Glasgow 1831, p. 18 f. Dr. John Brown, *Law of Christ respecting Civil Obedience*, 3d ed. p. 468 f.]

the endowment of a religion of which he disapproves, is worse than to tax him for any other object of which he disapproves.[1] It cannot be affirmed that the domain of conscience is limited to religion alone, or, in fact, that conscience has less to do with other matters. And it cannot be alleged, therefore, that conscience is violated in the case of a compulsory tax for the endowment of a religion which it cannot approve, and not violated in the case of a tax for any other purpose of which it cannot approve. The compulsory or coercive power of the state may, in short, be employed in a variety of ways *about* religion, while it is not employed *in* religion. The state may give the sanction of civil authority to a particular Confession of Faith, while it inflicts no disabilities on those who reject that faith. The state may endow a particular Church, and impose a public tax for that purpose; while it imposes no penalty on those who dissent from the Church thus endowed. In doing this, it is arrogating to itself no power but what is competent to it in its place as the supreme civil authority; and above all, it is arrogating no power in any respect inconsistent with the right of private judgment or the principles of toleration.

But while it is thus plain and undeniable that the doctrine of civil establishments of religion does not involve anything inconsistent with the principles of toleration, or the right and duty of private judgment, the argument may be pushed a great deal further. It may fairly be argued, that the Voluntary principle, consistently carried out, subverts the very foundation on which alone the principles of toleration and the right of private judgment can be made properly and securely to rest; and that the opposite principle, which maintains the duty of the state to recognise religion, is the only one on which they can be fully and consistently defended. On what footing, let me ask, does the right and duty of private judgment rest? What is it that gives me the title, which no man can lawfully take from me, to think, and judge, and act, and above all, to serve and worship God, as my own conscience, and not the conscience of another, shall dictate? What is it that confers on me the right to examine, and try, and prove all things for myself, without being respon-

[1] [Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments further Considered*, pp. 28–33, 153–160. Brown, *Law of Christ respecting Civil Obedience*. 3d ed. pp. xvi.–xix., 167–186.]

sible to man for the opinion I may form or the belief I may adopt?

The reason why I am not responsible to man for my opinions and belief, is because I am previously responsible to God. The cause why I am not accountable to my fellow in my search after truth, and in the judgments that I form, is just because I am before accountable to my Creator. This is the only sure foundation on which to rest the right of private judgment in a matter of faith and duty, so as that it shall be secure from the interference or tyranny of man. In such matters I cannot be the servant of man, because I am already the servant of God. My responsibility to God is too complete and sacred to admit of my being responsible in the same way to my fellow-creature. For what I believe,—for the opinions I have formed,—for the conclusions to which I have come in my search and inquiry after truth,—for all these I am accountable to God; and for that very reason I cannot be called upon to adopt a belief or assume a conviction at the bidding of man. In these matters I am the servant of another Master, and accountable only to Him. God claims the sole and supreme dominion over the conscience; and therefore it is that the conscience cannot be made the servant of man. My right of private judgment in matters of belief rests upon the footing that *there* I am responsible to God; and that therefore with a responsibility due to Him man cannot dare to interfere. The principle of universal toleration is founded on the principle of the universal responsibility of men to their Maker. Resting upon this footing, toleration is the right of every man, too holy and Divine for man to intermeddle with, and to attempt to rob him of which is to interfere with the prerogative of God. Resting upon any other footing, toleration is a right but of a secondary and insecure kind, to deprive a man of which is merely to abridge his social or political privileges.

And how does the Voluntary theory stand in regard to the only foundation on which the principle of toleration can securely and truly rest? According to that theory, the state has nothing to do with God, or man's relation to God, in the way of duty or privilege. The magistrate, in his official character, can know nothing of my responsibility to God, nor stand in awe of the right which that responsibility secures to me,—the right that, because accountable to Him, I cannot in the same way be

accountable to man. The state, as the state, has nothing to do with my relation to God, and cannot therefore regard in the only true and proper light my freedom from responsibility to man, as the necessary result of my previous responsibility to God. The magistrate who, proceeding on the Voluntary theory, disowns all reference to God and man's relation to God, may look on toleration as a social good or a political advantage; but he cannot look upon it in its highest and truest aspect, as a right due, not so much to man, as to God. Let the state be brought to regard man in his relation to God, and as in matters of conscience responsible to Him; and it will regard the principle of toleration and the right of private judgment, in the case of the humblest of its subjects, as a privilege fenced round with the authority and sacredness of God. Let the state disown such a view of it, and the principle of toleration will be deprived of very much both of its security and of its significance.

Any defence of the right of private judgment in matters of conscience, short of the argument that it is a right resulting directly from man's responsibility to God, will, I am persuaded, be a weak and insecure one. The right to toleration in the case of every man results very immediately from the principle, which is true in questions of conscience as in others, that a man cannot serve two masters in the same matter, and that if he is already the servant of God in matters of religious belief, he cannot in the same sense be the servant of his fellow. The principles of universal toleration have indeed been argued upon other grounds, but the effect has been to betray the cause of freedom and of truth. By one class of the defenders of the principle of free opinion and full toleration it has been argued, that the magistrate has no power to judge of truth or falsehood in religion, and that therefore he has no right to interfere with the opinions or convictions of his subjects. Such an argument as this is entirely fallacious, proceeding as it does upon the principle that the magistrate, because a magistrate, has ceased to be a man, and is himself absolved from his responsibility to God in matters of faith and religion. By a second class of the unwise defenders of the principles of toleration it has been argued, that truth and falsehood in matters of opinion are equally innocent when sincerely and conscientiously held, and that no man therefore ought to be punished for his opinions, whatever they may be.

Such an argument as this is no less unsound and mischievous than the former, founded as it is on the principle of the equal merit or demerit of truth and falsehood. By a third class of the advocates of toleration it is argued, that man is not responsible for his belief at all, and that therefore he cannot be a subject for praise or blame for any of his opinions. Such an argument as this is still more flagrantly opposed to truth than any of the others, denying, as it virtually does, the essential characteristic of man as a moral and accountable being. By another class still of the advocates of toleration it is argued, that the magistrate has nothing to do with opinions in any sense, and that it is both incompetent and impossible for him to deal with them, since they lie beyond the proper province of his authority altogether. And to a certain extent this argument is true, although not true in the wide and unlimited sense in which it is oftentimes urged.

But all these defences of the right of private judgment and public toleration, whether partially true or wholly false, agree in placing it on a footing directly calculated to lower its character and to weaken its claims. As a social good, calculated to promote the welfare of society, toleration is a privilege of no ordinary value. As a political good, one of the blessings of civil freedom, it is greatly to be prized. But there is a higher and holier aspect in which it is to be viewed. It is not as a social boon, or even as a political right, that it is principally to be regarded; nor is it on such a footing that its best defence is to be found. There is a higher character that it bears, and a more secure foundation on which it rests. The right of private judgment, as a right with which the magistrate in his public capacity, and my fellow-man in his private capacity, cannot and dare not intermeddle, is a privilege that belongs to me in virtue of my responsibility to God. Because by the very law of my being accountable to God, I must have freedom to obey Him; and man, whether in his official character as the magistrate or in his private character as my fellow-creature, cannot take from me that freedom. Within the domain of conscience God claims the sole and supreme authority; and with that claim man may not interfere. The principle of toleration ultimately rests on my right in matters of conscience "to obey God rather than man."

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole argument? Is the principle involved in a recognition by the state of God, and

man's responsibility to God, hostile to the principles of toleration and incompatible with the right of private judgment? The very reverse is the case. The right of toleration can never be placed on a secure foundation, such as that it shall appear a right too solemn and sacred to be intermeddled with by a fellow-creature, until the state is brought to see that it is a right of God and not of man,—a right flowing directly from the relation in which man stands to his Maker. Is the principle involved in the Voluntary theory—that the state has nothing to do with God, and man's duty to God—the only principle consistent with the rights of conscience and the claims of toleration? The very reverse is the case. By divorcing the principle of toleration from its direct relation to God, it robs it of half its authority, and more than half its sacredness, and degrades it from the level of a Divine appointment to that of a mere political privilege,—a civil claim to be owned or rejected according to considerations or notions of political expediency, and not a right as from God, never in any circumstances or on any pretence to be denied or resisted. The principle involved in the Voluntary theory is hostile equally to the true independence of the Church and the true claims of toleration. Let that principle be carried out to its legitimate issue, and let the state disown the Church as an ordinance of God, and regard it as a merely human and voluntary society, and almost the only security for its spiritual independence is removed; and its freedom, wherewith Christ made it free, is laid open to the encroachment and tyranny of Cæsar. Once more, let that principle be carried out to its legitimate issue, and let the state divorce the claim of toleration from the sanction and authority given to it by God, and the very foundations of religious freedom are undermined and shaken; and the right of private judgment loses a great part of its security, because it loses all its sacredness.[1]

SEC. VI. LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE: ITS EXTENT AND LIMITS.

The true apology for liberty of conscience has been nobly argued in the Westminster Confession of Faith. "God alone," so runs the striking and beautiful language of the Confession,

[1] Dickson, *Truth's Victory over Error*, chap. xx. Qu. i.–iii. *North British Review*, vol. xxxii. No. lxiv. pp. 427–438.

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship."[1] The conscience of man, the seat and dwelling-place of moral responsibility in his nature, is a temple within which there can be no more than one Lord to be worshipped or obeyed. God is Himself the Lord of this temple; and because He is so, it must be free from the presence and power of any other master. Beneath the shelter of a responsibility previously due to God, the conscience is free from all responsibility to man; and, because already bound in allegiance to a higher Master, it cannot be the servant or the slave of any human lord. Viewed in this light, liberty of conscience is not a mere social or civil privilege; it is something far higher and holier. Man has been made free as to his conscience from the doctrine and commandments of his fellow-men, in order that he may be free to serve God; and liberty of conscience, as regards his fellow-creatures, is a right that belongs to him in virtue of his relation to his Creator. To deprive him of that right, to assume the title to dictate to the conscience and impose upon it the authority of man, is for man to trespass into a sanctuary where God alone may enter, and where none but God may rule. Another Lord is already Master there; another and higher authority already occupies the throne of the human conscience; and it is not for man to seat himself in the temple of God, or to "show himself there as though he were God." The right of conscience to be free from the commandments and authority of man is identical with the right of every man to obey God; and that Statute-book which tells of the responsibility of every creature to his Creator, is the charter of universal toleration.

It is of considerable importance that the question of liberty of conscience should be argued on true principles, and that the right of private judgment in matters of faith and worship should be placed on its just footing,—namely, man's previous responsibility to God, and his consequent exemption from responsibility to his fellow-man. It is not as a mere social or political right that liberty of conscience may be best and most successfully vindicated. The apology for religious freedom must be placed on religious grounds; and only then will the argument be both

[1] Conf. chap. xx. 2. Gillespie, *CXI. Propositions concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church*, Prop. 60. Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. x. 5.

secure and successful. Liberty of conscience is man's right, because it is necessary in order that he may obey God. He must be free in matters of faith and worship from mere human authority, in order that he may be under law to God. And both the freedom of the Church as a Church, and the freedom of conscience in individuals, can then be triumphantly argued and vindicated, and then only, when they are seen and acknowledged by the rulers of the world to be, not of man, but of God. Deprive the independence of the Church of Christ of the plea that it is of God, and other arguments will be of little avail in comparison. Deprive liberty of conscience in individuals of the plea that it is necessary in order to serve God, and other apologies for religious freedom, however eloquent, will be weak and unsuccessful. Make the claim of spiritual independence on the part of the Christian Church not a claim on behalf of God, but a mere demand for toleration on behalf of a society of men, and you rob it of much of its force, and all of its sanctity. Make the claim of liberty of conscience on the part of individuals to be a claim not dependent on their duty and responsibility to God, but dependent on their rights as citizens or members of the political community, and you incalculably weaken the strength of it. The independence of the Christian Church as a society, and the right of private judgment of the members as individuals, *may* be argued on other grounds, and perhaps vindicated; but never will the argument be so mighty and so resistless as when it is lifted up in the name of God. It is only when you can show the charter of religious freedom written as it were by the finger of the Almighty, that men feel the plea to be unanswerable. When, on behalf of the spiritual independence of the Church, you can demonstrate that it is a freedom which Christ purchased and conferred on it at the price of His blood, you feel that you are strong; and with such a plea you can go before the face of kings, and in His name demand that they shall do homage to Him by doing homage to His Church. Who does not see that the argument of Divine right, urged in behalf of the Church's freedom, is mightier far than any plea that could be urged in behalf of a mere human or voluntary society? When, again, on behalf of liberty of conscience in the case of individuals, you can demonstrate that it is a right necessary to their responsibility to God, you feel that here too you are unanswerable; and with such an argument upon

your lips, you can go to the bar of your country's Legislature, and demand that if they will not hear you for the sake of civil freedom, they will hear you and grant your request for the sake of God. Who does not see that the argument for religious freedom, drawn from Divine sanction, is more cogent far than any reasoning from considerations of mere social advantage or political right?

It is one grand charge to be brought against the principles of the Voluntary school, that they rob the cause of the Church's independence and of religious freedom of such an argument as this. They take from the Church its birthright as born of God, when at the bar of the civil magistrate, and would make it to plead with the world for its heavenly freedom upon the low ground of merely worldly considerations. They take from man the charter in which the finger, not of man, but of God, has written his right to liberty of conscience, and would make him a petitioner for religious freedom with the helpless argument upon his lips of mere political expediency or right. They make the Church of God a suitor to the world for the freedom which God Himself has given her; and worse than that, they make the Church to argue for her heaven-bestowed rights upon principles that imply that it is a question of mere political privilege or the want of it, whether the world shall give them or deny them. They make man to be a petitioner to his fellow-man for that liberty of conscience which is his as the gift of God; and, worse than that, they bid him plead for religious freedom upon grounds that make it a mere matter of civil right or expediency to give or to refuse it. There can be no true or trustworthy defence of the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ which does not proceed upon the principle that it is a right bestowed by God; which, because it is so, the rulers of this world, as responsible to Him, can neither give nor take away. There can be no true apology for liberty of conscience, except one that pleads its cause as of God, and not of man—the right of all from their common Creator, which it can never be in the power of their fellow-men to confer or deny. Placed on such a footing, and on such alone, the argument for the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ, and for liberty of conscience, is unanswerable and complete.

These views are remarkably illustrated and confirmed by the statements in regard to this matter of Scripture, and more

especially of our Lord Himself. When our Saviour at the bar of Pilate was placed in circumstances in which He was called upon to answer for Himself and His cause, and more especially to explain the nature of His kingdom in its relations to the civil magistrate, He vindicated its claims to the protection and toleration of the state, not on the footing of merely political right, but on the high ground of Divine right. It was not as His civil privilege that Christ demanded for Himself and His doctrine the toleration of the Roman governor. He demanded toleration for His doctrine because it was *the truth of God*, and protection for Himself because He was *the witness to the truth of God*. When questioned by the civil magistrate as to the nature and claims of His kingdom, "Jesus answered, and said, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." [1]

There is nothing here of a mere claim to the interposition of the civil magistrate on the footing of political right, or as a toleration that the magistrate was bound to yield equally and alike to error as to truth—to the falsehood of man as much as to the faith of God. On the contrary, there is an express appeal to His doctrine *as* the truth of God, and to Himself *as* the witness sent by God to testify of it, as the ground or reason for the protection that He claims. *In the first place*, Christ seeks to disabuse the mind of Pilate, in regard to the nature of His Church, of the idea that it might be like any of the powers of this world, established or upheld by force; He tells him that it is spiritual in its nature and authority, and therefore not liable to become an object of jealousy to the state, as trenching upon its authority or jurisdiction. "My kingdom," says our Lord, "is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews." And then, *in the second place*, having thus sought to remove the jealousy of the civil magistrate by explaining the spiritual nature of His kingdom, Christ goes on to claim protection for Himself

[1] John xviii. 36, 37.

and cause, because both are of God. His truth, He tells Pilate, was the truth of God; and Himself was the Divine Witness to that truth. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Our Lord does not stay to bandy arguments with the Roman governor regarding His right to protection as a civil privilege common to all, or His claim to toleration as a concession due to all doctrines and opinions whatsoever, whether true or false, whether from God or from man. He does not condescend to use such a plea. It may be true or may be false; it may be well founded or not. But His argument is of a higher order; His right to the protection of the civil arm is more sacred by far. He is Himself of God, and His doctrine is the truth of God; and because they are so, He calls upon the Roman magistrate to know and do homage to God in the person of His Messenger, and in the case of His revealed Word. This is the ground on which our Lord puts the right of His Church to toleration and protection at the hands of kings and rulers. It is on the broad and sacred foundation of Divine right that He lays the basis of the spiritual independence of His Church, and of the liberty of conscience of its individual members.[1]

Such, then, is the scriptural argument for liberty of conscience, and for the right of toleration for the Church of Christ as a Church, and for its members as individuals. But while the foundation of the right is thus plain, there is another question of a far more delicate and difficult kind, that meets us in regard to liberty of conscience. To what extent does this right of every man to believe and act according to his own conscience, and not another's, go? Are there any bounds at all—and if so, what bounds—to this liberty of private judgment and free opinion? In other words, what is the extent and what are the limits of this universal right of liberty of conscience?

This is one of the most difficult questions of any within the bounds either of theology or of politics,—belonging as it does, under different aspects of it, to both sciences. That the conscience of man "has been left free from the doctrines and commandments of men," in order that it may be singly and entirely responsible to God, is a truth resting on the authority of the

[1] [*Lectures on the Headship of Christ*, Edin. 1840, Lec. iv. pp. 10–16.]

Divine Word, and which kings and rulers, in dealing with matters of conscience, ought never to forget. But it is no less true and undeniable, that absolute and unlimited liberty to believe and act in religious matters as his conscience may dictate, is *not* the right of any man, and from the very nature of the case cannot be. There are bounds beyond which freedom of conscience becomes not a right, but a wrong, and liberty degenerates into licentiousness. The inquiry therefore remains for us, as to the extent and limits of this right, as to how far it may go without sin, and as to where it must stop, if it is to be enjoyed or exercised with safety. That there are limits to the right to think and speak and act as conscience may dictate, no one can deny. At what point those limits are to be fixed, and where the line is to be drawn that divides liberty from licentiousness, is the question of all others the most difficult and delicate in the science of morals,—a problem which, although it may be and is solved every day in practice, is in theory one which it is well-nigh impossible accurately to state or fully to resolve. I do not pretend to give the solution of such a problem, or to attempt to lay down precisely the extent and limits of liberty of conscience in religious matters. But there are certain general principles applicable to the question, which may serve in some measure to indicate the direction in which the line is to be drawn, and will help us at least to approximate towards an answer. To these I would now briefly advert.

I. The right of liberty of conscience common to all is limited by the enactments of the Divine law.

This proposition is abundantly obvious, and will probably, when stated in general and express terms, be denied by none. If God has revealed a law to man at all, that law must, from the very nature of the case, be supreme. When God's law speaks, then man, and the conscience in man, can have no alternative but submission. There can be no liberty, under whatsoever pretext or plea, to act, or think, or believe in opposition to that law. Conscience itself, although the supreme law to the individual man, is yet under law to God; and its rights must give way to His. It can put in no claim to be obeyed or regarded, when that claim runs counter to the express enactment of the Divine law. No man can have a right, even at the bidding of a mistaken conscience, to do that which is morally wrong. To affirm the opposite,—to assert that men are at liberty, under the plea of

conscience, to think and believe and act as it may dictate, without respect to any other authority or control, is virtually to deny any other law of right and wrong, to rob God of His title to rule, to make conscience the only authority and lawgiver, and to render crimes and errors which it may sanction, no longer evil, but good. The liberty of conscience must be limited by the Divine law; and it can have no rights in opposition to that very God who has placed it in man's bosom, and who gave it all its powers. The law of God on the one hand, and the conscience of man on the other, are not to be regarded as authorities equal and co-ordinate, each supreme within its own province. On the contrary, the conscience is subordinate, because responsible to that law, and cannot therefore have authority or rights independently of God. The very reason why conscience is not responsible to man is, because it is the servant of God. That liberty of conscience, then, which each moral and responsible being claims for himself, is not an unlimited right; it gives a man no title to believe and think and act in religious matters as he pleases, even although conscience should sanction his doing so: there is a limit to this freedom, beyond which he cannot go without sin; and that limit is the supreme enactments of God's law. Beyond the boundary line thus drawn conscience has no right, and can give no freedom to man. There cannot be a greater abuse of the sacred right of liberty of conscience, than when it is employed, as it not unfrequently is, as a plea for setting aside the authority of the Divine law; and when, under the pretext of conscience, a man accounts his opinions and practice to be innocent, because conscientiously adopted and maintained. The first limit, then, set to the rights of conscience, is the obligation of the law of God. There cannot be a more dangerous tenet than that which, under the plea of liberty of conscience, expressly or virtually denies this limitation.

II. The right of liberty of conscience common to all is limited by the ordinance of civil authority.

In speaking of the rights of conscience, in their relation to civil government, I speak of them as they are claimed on behalf, not of opinions and convictions held within the mind, but of opinions and convictions publicly uttered or acted upon. Not as though we were less really accountable in the former case than in the latter; on the contrary, we are just as truly responsible for our beliefs as for our actions, although it is a different authority

that comes in to reward or punish, so long as the belief remains unexpressed.[1] But let the latent conviction be once openly avowed, and the difference between a wrong opinion and a wrong action is at once felt to be not so great as to justify those who say, that in no case can a man be lawfully brought to account at the bar of a human tribunal for the former, although he may for the latter. With regard to a man's belief and thoughts, so long as they are hidden within his own bosom, it is true that no human authority has the right, any more than the power, to intermeddle with them, or to make them the subject of censure or restraint. But when that belief or those opinions are openly avowed and published to the world, or when they are developed in action and exhibited in a man's conduct, they rightly and legitimately come under the cognizance and control of the civil magistrate. For opinions entertained in a man's own heart, and unexpressed, he cannot properly be made responsible to human authority: the only limitation, in that case, to his freedom of thought and belief, is the authority of the Divine law, which takes cognizance not only of the outward, but also of the inward man: his only responsibility for these is a responsibility to God. But for opinions published to the world, and reduced to practice, he is in a certain measure responsible to civil authority; and though he may for these urge the plea of conscience, and urge it truly, yet his liberty of conscience in the matter is put under a second restriction in addition to the first, in consequence of his becoming responsible for his avowed sentiments and public actions to the law of man. In other words, the liberty of conscience which a man may rightly claim, is limited by the lawful exercise on the part of the magistrate of civil authority.

It is not for me to define the extent and limits of the magistrate's authority in matters with respect to which conscience may be pleaded. It is one of the most delicate problems in political science, to determine how far civil authority may go in restraining or punishing the publication of opinions, or the exercise of practices, hostile to the safety or interests of civil society. But few or none perhaps will deny, that there are occasions on which the magistrate may be called upon to interpose to restrain by civil censure or punishment the expression of opinions or the indul-

[1] [Dr. H. Bonar, *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation*, London 1866. Preface, pp. x.–xxi. Gillespie, *Miscellany Questions*, chap. xi. xii.]

gence of conduct plainly at variance with the wellbeing, if not the very being of society, even when these may be able to plead the argument of conscience in their favour, and to plead it not untruly. It matters not whether such opinions and practices be crimes in politics or religion,—whether they may be named treason, as hostile to the very existence of the state, or atheism or blasphemy, as inconsistent with the existence of religion in any form. It is quite possible to be conscientious in these things. A man may be perfectly honest in pleading conscience and the liberty of conscience for the venting of treason or blasphemy, and for the right to act it out in exertions for the subversion of all civil order, or for the destruction of all religious faith. A man may be an anarchist upon principle, or an atheist upon principle. He may urge his liberty of conscience as an argument to justify his efforts against the very existence of all that is dearest to man, both in religion and civil order; and few or none will deny, that there may be emergencies, arising out of such circumstances as these, when the civil magistrate may be called upon to interfere penally to repress or punish such religious or civil crimes, even although they may be sanctified by the plea of conscience in the minds of those who are guilty of them. In other words, liberty of conscience is no valid plea, when urged to justify wrong done against the peace and wellbeing of society. There is a limit affixed to the rights of conscience by the rights of civil society. There is a boundary drawn around my liberty of conscience by the lawful exercise of the authority of the civil magistrate. It may be difficult or impossible, theoretically, to tell precisely *where* the point is to be fixed at which the magistrate is justified to interfere, and where conscience can no longer plead its right in opposition to the interference. But that there *is* such a point, few or none will pretend to deny.

The truth is, that those two ordinances of God—that of civil authority on the one side, and that of conscience on the other—cannot be inconsistent with or destructive of each other. They are designed for concert and co-operation, not for conflict or mutual destruction. Those disciples of toleration who would plead liberty of conscience as an argument to justify resistance to civil authority in its lawful exercise, are wrong. Those disciples of despotism who would plead the authority of civil government in order to set aside or overbear the rights of conscience, are

equally wrong. Civil government on the one hand, and conscience on the other, are alike ordinances of God, and were appointed to act in harmony with each other; and that they *may act* in harmony, they must *limit* each other. Civil authority is not absolute or unlimited; for there is a point where in its exercise it meets with the rightful domain of conscience; and the sword ought to be sheathed, and to give way before the claims which conscience pleads. Conscience, on the other hand, is not absolute or unlimited either; for there is a point where its rights are met and bounded by the rights of civil authority.

III. The liberty of conscience belonging to all is limited by the ordinance of ecclesiastical authority.

There is a standing which God has given to the Christian Church in relation to conscience and the things of conscience, which cannot be overlooked. Like the state, the Church is an ordinance of God; and like the state, it is vested by God with a certain measure of authority of its own kind, which entitles it to claim and receive a certain measure of obedience from its members. The Church, for example, has power in matters of faith, not indeed arbitrarily to dictate a new truth or new doctrine of its own, but to declare the doctrine and truth of Christ; and in doing so, to determine and decide for its own purposes upon the faith and profession of its members. Such decisions in regard to controversies of faith, and such declarations of the truth of Christ, if consonant with the Word of God, are to be received and submitted to by its members, not only or merely because they are consonant with His Word, but because of the authority by which they are made being an ordinance of God for that end. The Church has power also in matters of discipline; not indeed imperiously to wield the power of the keys, but to proceed by admonition, and censure, and spiritual reproof, and finally excommunication, in order to reclaim or cut off offenders, and to vindicate the honour of Christ and the purity of His house and kingdom. And such discipline, too, is to be reverenced and submitted to because of the authority of the Church, as divinely appointed to exercise it. Here too, then, we have the lawful exercise of a lawful authority that must oftentimes come into contact with the liberty of conscience in the case of individuals. And conscience may be pleaded, and pleaded honestly, on behalf of opinions and practice in the case of her members, which yet it

may be right and indispensable for the Church to condemn or restrain by means of the spiritual authority committed to her. Shall we say that the spiritual sword is to be stayed, and the authority of the Church disarmed, in consequence of the argument of conscience on the part of the offender? Shall we say that the exercise of that authority is unlawful, and its censures null and void, because of the liberty of conscience that is pleaded in opposition to them? To do so would be to deny the right of Church authority altogether; it would be to set aside, in any case in which conscience might be alleged, all ecclesiastical judgment or restraint as regards the offender, and to make religion entirely a matter of personal and individual concern, in regard to which the Church had no right to interfere and no commission to act. Such an interpretation of the liberty of conscience on the part of her members must destroy Church authority altogether, and must leave the kingdom of Christ without government or order, utterly helpless to redress wrong or restrain offences, and without power to guard its own communion from open profanation and dishonour. The plea of absolute and unlimited liberty of conscience is inconsistent with the authority and existence of a Church.

The doctrine of the rights of private judgment, in this unrestricted sense, and the plea of liberty of conscience without any limitation, have been employed at one time to invalidate and undermine the lawful authority of the state, and at another time to weaken and subvert the lawful authority of the Church. It was employed in both ways by the Sectaries in England during the period of the Commonwealth in the seventeenth century.[1] There can hardly indeed be a more dangerous or mischievous perversion of a valuable and important truth. The right of liberty of conscience is a right than which none can be more precious. But there are limits set to that right, as we have seen, both by the ordinance of civil government on the one side, and the ordinance of Church government on the other. To use the most expressive and significant language of the Confession of Faith: "The powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve, one another."[2] The

[1] See note at the end of the following section of this chapter.
[2] Conf. c. xx. 4.

authority of the Church, on the one hand, is limited by the rights of conscience on the part of her members; and the rights of conscience, on the other, are limited by the authority of the Church. They are wrong who would stretch the authority of the Church so far as to destroy liberty of conscience; and they are equally wrong who would stretch the rights of conscience so far as to destroy the authority of the Church. There may be an ecclesiastical tyranny that overbears conscience and reason too; but there may be also the plea, not of liberty but of licentiousness, for conscience, that overthrows all ecclesiastical order. Those two—the Church of Christ and the right of conscience—are alike ordinances of God, and they are intended mutually to limit each other.

Such, then, are the limitations which it is necessary to attach to the doctrine of liberty of conscience. The right is limited by the law of God, by the authority of the civil magistrate, and by the authority of the Church. "They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty," says the Westminster Confession, "shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God."[1]

SEC. VII. THE DOCTRINE OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH ON CHURCH AND STATE.

We have now discussed at some length the subject of the Church and its relations to the state. It has been our task to consider the possibility and lawfulness of a friendly connection between the two; to argue the duty, both as it respects the Church and as it respects the state, of such an alliance; to indicate the necessity of some kind of understanding and concert between them, unless both are fatally to suffer; to discuss the bearing of such a co-operation on the spiritual independence of the Church and the practice of toleration by the state; and lastly, to investigate, in connection with the general argument, the question of liberty of conscience both as regards its extent and its limitations. And now, in bringing to a close the discussion, it may not be unimportant or uninteresting to consider the authori-

[1] Conf. *ut supra*. [See an article on "Church and State" in the *North British Review*, No. lxiv. Art. vi., written by Dr. Bannerman at the time of the Cardross case, some extracts from which are given in Appendix D.]

tative declarations of our Church on this somewhat difficult subject, as these are found embodied in her public standards. It is all the more important to do so, as the statements of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the subject of the power and duty of the civil magistrate in regard to religion have been both misinterpreted and misunderstood. A twofold accusation has been brought against the statements of the Confession on this subject. They have been charged, *in the first place*, with giving countenance to the Erastian principle of ascribing to the civil magistrate a proper jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters, and of surrendering to his power the inherent freedom and independence of the Church;[1] and they have been charged, *in the second place*, with giving countenance to principles of persecution, and infringing seriously upon the rights of conscience in matters of faith.[2] It may be well to consider the justice and the force of these two accusations, which, if true, are in no small measure fitted to damage the credit due to one of the noblest uninspired expositions of Divine truth anywhere to be found, and to subvert our confidence in it as an accurate and authoritative confession of our faith. Such charges are not lightly to be brought or believed against the authors of the Westminster Confession, who in an age of profound theological learning and great attainments in Divine truth were conspicuous among their contemporaries, and who especially were eminent in that very department of controversial Divinity which relates to the magistrate's power and office in reference to the Church. The question of the relations of the civil and ecclesiastical powers to each other was argued at the date of the Westminster Assembly as it never was argued either before or since; and it was the very men who had won the palm in the controversy, and gained the victory for the truth, who in that Assembly brought their vast learning and vaster powers to bear upon the point, and to lay down in the Confession of Faith the extent and limits of the magistrate's authority in regard to religion. The character of the men who drew up the Confession, and the circumstances of the time in which they were called upon to do so, afford no small presumption against the truth of such charges.

[1] [Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments further Considered*, Glasgow 1831, p. 324. Wardlaw, *National Church Establishments Examined*, London 1839, pp. 360–364.]

[2] [Wardlaw, *National Church Establishments Examined*, pp. 368–371.]

Those who had fought the battle of the Church's independence against the Erastians of their day with their learned and ready pens, and who further still had to contend with the Parliament of England, under whose authority they were assembled, on the very same question, are not the men to be lightly, or without strong evidence, accused of justifying Erastianism or persecution. Let us endeavour to examine the grounds on which such a charge is made. Is it true that the Westminster Confession of Faith arms the civil magistrate with a power to destroy the liberty of Christ's Church, giving to the state a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things? Further still, is it true that the Westminster Confession of Faith disavows the principles of toleration, and countenances the doctrine of persecution for conscience sake?

I. Let us inquire into the truth of the charge brought against the standards, of laying down principles that countenance Erastianism.

The ground on which this accusation is made, is to be found in the third section of the 23d chapter of the Confession of Faith, under the title, "Of the Civil Magistrate." It is there stated, "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Such is the doctrine laid down in our standards respecting the duty and office of the civil magistrate in regard to the Church. It may be conceded that, taken out of its connection, and viewed apart without reference to other statements in the Confession, and without regard to the use and meaning in their day of the somewhat technical language employed by the authors of it, the words do sound at first as if they ascribed to the civil magistrate a larger share of power *circa sacra* than we should now concede to him. But a very slight attention to the context, and to the real meaning of the language made use of, will be enough to remove all difficulty from the passage.

There are two canons of criticism which, in order to guard against misinterpretation of this, as of many other passages, it is somewhat important to bear in mind. *First*, the language of two or more passages in any given composition, more especially a composition purporting to be an accurate and authoritative statement of doctrine or Divine truth, must be interpreted in the sense that makes them consistent with each other; and it is not allowable to assume such an interpretation of them as would make the author plainly and directly to contradict himself. And *second*, the language of any passage must be understood in the sense commonly attached to it in the author's day, and not in the sense which subsequent changes in expression at any after time may have affixed to it. These two canons of interpretation are obviously just in themselves, and are indispensable to a right understanding of any author. And if we bear them in mind, there will be no great difficulty in reaching the true meaning of the passages already quoted from the Confession of Faith, and in ascertaining that, so interpreted, it ascribes to the civil magistrate no undue or Erastian jurisdiction in connection with spiritual things.

1. Other statements of the Confession of Faith, to be interpreted in connection with this passage found in the 23d chapter, expressly and undeniably exclude the proper jurisdiction of the civil magistrate in spiritual matters; and this passage must be understood in accordance with, and not in contradiction to, them.

That such is the case, the very slightest reference to the other chapters of the Confession, which treat of the Church and of the state, will abundantly manifest. To whom does the Confession ascribe supreme authority and jurisdiction within the bounds of the Christian Church, so that from Him all rule and power within it are derived? Is it to that party who is supreme over the state, and from whom all authority in the state proceeds? Or is the magistrate expressly and wholly excluded from such authority, by the entire ascription of it to another and not to him? Let the brief but most comprehensive statement in the 25th chapter of the Confession answer the question: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."[1] The right interpretation and legitimate application of this single truth would, without anything else, fairly lead to the exclusion of the

[1] Conf. c. xxv. 6.

civil magistrate from the province of the Church, and to the denial of any proper jurisdiction on his part in spiritual matters. But is it insinuated or objected, that although the civil magistrate cannot, in consistency with the language of the Confession, be the head of the Church, he may be a subordinate ruler under the Head, and may still possess and exercise, in a certain sense, jurisdiction in the Church, although an inferior jurisdiction to that of Christ? Is it alleged that, without any great violence done to the language of the Confession, the civil magistrate may still be looked upon as a ruler in the Christian society, holding a real although a secondary place in the government of its affairs? Then let the explicit language of the 30th chapter of the Confession remove the possibility of such a construction being put on the doctrine of our standards: "The Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate."[1] Neither as supreme nor as subordinate—neither as occupying the first seat of authority, nor yet an inferior office within the Church—has the civil magistrate, according to the doctrine of the Confession, any place or footing, in the sense of proper jurisdiction, in spiritual things. Or, if additional evidence were wanting on the question of the unequivocal and uniform doctrine of our standards, excluding the state from authority within the Church, that evidence would be found in the very section of the Confession quoted as the ground on which the charge of Erastianism against it is built: "The civil magistrate," says the first clause of that section, "may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or *the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven*." It is plain that this first clause is intended to limit what follows in the section. This is obvious both from its position in the sentence at the beginning, and also from the conjunction "*yet*," which immediately follows: "*yet* he, the magistrate, has authority, and it is his duty," etc. Now there can be no difficulty in understanding the import of this first or limiting clause of the sentence.

"The power of the keys" has a twofold meaning: one more extensive, implying the whole power belonging to the Church, as contradistinguished from "the power of the sword," belonging to the civil magistrate; the other a more limited meaning, implying

[1] Conf. c. xxx. 1.

the ordinary power of government and discipline exercised by the Church. It is in this latter or more restricted sense of the phrase that the expression must be understood in this passage, when it is distinguished from the power of the Church in the administration of Word and ordinances. And what, I ask, is the limitation thus put upon the office of the magistrate, at the very outset of the description of his power, and to be understood as restricting it in all ascribed to him of rule or authority afterward? Not only may he not assume to himself the power to dispense Word and Sacrament in the Church; but further, he may not assume to himself the power to exercise government or discipline within it. The exclusion of the civil magistrate from the whole province that can possibly belong to the Church is absolute and complete; for all that province is included within the twofold description of power implied in the two expressions, "the administration of the Word and Sacraments," and "the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Within this entire territory the civil magistrate cannot enter, and the Church claims jurisdiction over none other. The uniform and undeniable doctrine of the Confession of Faith, then, is a denial of the proper jurisdiction of the civil magistrate in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. Nowhere is this denial more explicit and broad than in the opening clause of the very sentence which has been made the occasion of this charge of Erastianism against it, which clause must be held to limit and rule the interpretation of the rest. And unless the Confession of Faith is to be interpreted upon the principle of making it contradict itself, and that within the narrow limits of a single sentence, instead of being consistent with itself, it is impossible that the charge of Erastianism can be well founded.

2. The ascription of power to the civil magistrate *about* the Church, in the passage of the Confession of Faith under discussion, can be easily and fairly explained without conceding to the civil magistrate power *within* the Church, as on the Erastian scheme.

Almost the whole of the plausibility belonging to the objection, which from this sentence in our standards would impute Erastianism to them, arises from the confounding of these two things, the power of proper jurisdiction within the Church, and the power of a certain authority about the Church. These two

things are widely different: the one of them belonging, according to the doctrine of the Confession, to the civil magistrate; the other of them being expressly denied to him by the same doctrine. But where this difference is not seen or is denied, the ascription to the state of the one authority is readily enough mistaken for the concession to it of the other. The Confession distinctly and frequently announces the doctrine, that the civil magistrate has a certain power about religion,—a certain authority and duty to provide for, and promote by competent means the wellbeing and interests of, the Church. At the beginning of the chapter from which the sentence in dispute is quoted, the Confession lays down the general principle, that "God, the Supreme Lord and King of the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under Him, over the people, for His own glory and the public good;" and then, that in the managing of their office, they "ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace;"[1]—a principle which fairly implies that the state has a certain office or authority about the Church, to promote and advance its interests. And the Confession does nothing more than carry out this principle, and point out more in detail what the magistrate may do for this end, when it goes on, in the passage under discussion, to ascribe to him his place and powers in the matter. Now, this is a widely different thing from attributing to the civil magistrate jurisdiction *within* the Church; neither can it be regarded as laying the Confession open to the charge of Erastianism. All that is fairly implied in it, is the ascription to the state of a certain authority about the Church, for the purpose of promoting its interests, not the ascription to it of an authority within the Church, for the purpose of exercising jurisdiction there. No doubt the disciples of the Voluntary school may confound these two things, or identify them; and having denied any distinction between them, may affirm that when the Confession ascribes a power *about* the Church to the magistrate, it in reality ascribes to him a power *within* the Church.[2] But except upon the Voluntary principle, which we need not now stop to refute, the two things are not identical; and the charge therefore of Erastianism, built on their identification, is unfounded.

3. More particularly, the special instrumentality described in

[1] Conf. c. xxiii. 1, 2.

[2] [Wardlaw, *National Church Establishments Examined*, p. 362.]

the Confession of Faith as proper to be employed by the civil magistrate in the exercise of his authority about the Church, involves no Erastian usurpation over it.

What is the method or the instrumentality to be used by the magistrate in attaining the great end which the Confession declares that it is competent for him to seek and aim at about the Church? The passage under discussion distinctly declares this. "Yet he hath authority," says the Confession, after denying to the magistrate "the power of the keys,"—"yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God may be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof," continues the Confession, in describing the instrumentality to be employed, "for the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Now we have here first of all a statement of the *object* to be aimed at by the civil magistrate, and next a description of the *means* to be employed by him for that purpose. The object to be aimed at is described as "the preservation of unity and peace in the Church, the maintenance of the purity and completeness of its doctrine, the suppression of blasphemy and heresy, the reformation of corruptions and abuses in its worship and discipline, and the due observance and administration of ordinances." This is the object to be aimed at by the magistrate; and no one except those Voluntaries who hold that the state has nothing to do with religion, will deny that it is both competent and good for the magistrate to aim at such an end. Every man, indeed, whether in public office or private life, is bound to seek to attain such an object by his prayers, and by every other means competent to him. The only question that can arise in connection with the doctrine thus laid down, is as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the means which it is said the magistrate may employ to accomplish the object. How or in what terms are those means described? The method by which the civil magistrate may, according to the Confession, seek to attain the end in view, is described by four different forms of expression in the passage under discussion.

1*st*. The magistrate is to "*take order*" for those objects or ends which he aims at. The expression is a technical one, common in the controversial theology of the times of the Westminster Assembly, and undoubtedly to be interpreted according to the *usus loquendi* of that day. It is a very general term, which may be easily proved to mean generally, *to provide for, to attend to, to take care to accomplish*,—language very far from involving the use of Erastian instrumentality or jurisdiction in the affairs of the Church.

2*d*. The magistrate, for the effecting of his object, is said to have power to "*call synods*." Neither does this second method to be used by him necessarily imply any authority or jurisdiction on his part to decide or rule in spiritual things. In the second section of the 31st chapter of the Confession of Faith, the same doctrine in regard to the power of the civil magistrate "to call synods of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with about matters of religion," is laid down. But the Act of Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, which ratified the Westminster Confession as the Confession of our Church, expressly excepts this doctrine in regard to the magistrate's power of summoning synods, and limits it to the use of Churches not duly constituted or settled. "It is declared," says the Act of Assembly 1647, in reference to the Westminster Confession, "it is declared that the Assembly understands some parts of the second article of the 31st chapter only of Kirks not settled or constituted in point of government; and that although in such Kirks a synod of ministers and other fit persons may be called by the magistrate's authority and nomination, without any other call, to consult and advise with about matters of religion; and although, likewise, the ministers of Christ, without delegation from their Churches, may of themselves and by virtue of their office meet together synodically in such Kirks not yet constituted, yet neither of these ought to be done in Kirks constituted and settled; it being always free to the magistrate to advise with synods of ministers and ruling elders meeting upon delegation from their Churches either ordinarily or, being indicted by his authority, occasionally, and *pro re natâ*; it being also free to assemble together synodically, as well *pro re natâ* as at the ordinary times, upon delegation from the Churches, by the intrinsical power received from Christ, as often as it is necessary for the good of

the Church so to assemble, in case the magistrate, to the detriment of the Church, withhold or deny his consent; the necessity of occasional Assemblies being first remonstrate unto him by humble supplication." But independently of the limitation attached by our Church to the doctrine of the Confession on this point, and with which limitation its ministers subscribe it, the language of the Confession does not necessarily imply anything Erastian. If it is admitted that the Scriptures do give a certain authority to the civil magistrate to seek to promote the Church's welfare as well as that of the state, it were hardly possible, I think, to deny that upon Scripture grounds he has warrant also to summon together Assemblies of the Church on occasion, to give advice or to ask it, in regard to the duties whether of the Church or of the state.

3*d*. The civil magistrate, for the better effecting of his object, has, according to the doctrine of the Confession, power "to be *present* at synods" which he calls. This is the third kind of instrumentality which it is lawful for him to employ to gain his end. With regard to this, it may be fairly maintained that, independently of any other title, it is the civil right of the magistrate to be present at any assembly whatsoever, convened within his dominion. But apart from this, the presence of the magistrate in the synods of the Church can imply no Erastian jurisdiction over them so long as he does not ask to preside, or dictate, or interfere in their deliberations.

4*th*. The last method of seeking to attain his object mentioned by the Confession is described in these terms: the magistrate is to be present at synods, and "*to provide* that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Here too, as in the case of "taking order," the expression is a somewhat technical one, and to be interpreted according to the use of such theological terms at the time when employed. Explained according to this principle, the term means simply *to make it an object of care and attention generally*, that what is done be done according to the word of God. So interpreted, it comes very far short indeed of anything implying Erastian control on the part of the magistrate in seeking his object, or any assertion of a right to review, or reverse, or in any way overbear, the decisions of Church Courts. These are all the means specified by the Confession of Faith as lying open to the civil magistrate to employ

in seeking to promote the interests of religion and of the Church of Christ; and it is plain that none of them imply or necessitate on his part the assumption of any proper control or jurisdiction in spiritual matters.[1]

II. Let us briefly inquire into the truth of the charge brought against the Confession of Faith, of laying down principles that countenance persecution for conscience sake.

In support of this second accusation, reference is made to the fourth section of the 20th chapter of the Confession. It runs as follows: "And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, on pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions or maintaining of such practices as are contrary to the light of nature or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices as either in their own nature, or in their manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and by the power of the civil magistrate." Such is the passage in the Westminster Confession, on which the charge against it of avowing and abetting persecution is founded. Let us see whether, as in the case of the former charge, a more careful consideration of the language and principles of the standards, not as seen in this insulated statement, but viewed in connection with their whole doctrine on the question, may not serve to rebut the accusation.

Now, *in the first place*, the principles of the Confession of Faith undeniably exclude persecution for conscience sake, if its statements are to be made consistent with each other, and not self-contradictory.

In the very chapter from which the passage in question is

[1] Gillespie, *CXI. Propositions concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church*, Prop. 3–6, 39–52, 62–69, 80–99. Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. i. Tract ii. cap. iv. Qu. 4, 5, 9–15. M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, Edinr. 1821, pp. 138–143. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 211–234.

extracted, and towards the commencement of it, as the leading and ruling proposition of the whole, the doctrine of liberty of conscience is broadly and unequivocally laid down: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines or obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."[1] The principles here laid down, if fairly carried out, involve in them all that is necessary to establish the doctrine of toleration in its present sense, and to exclude the possibility of persecution for conscience sake. The fondest devotee and most eloquent advocate of toleration never laid down a nobler or a surer foundation on which to rear the apology for universal liberty of conscience. And unless the leading proposition contained in the chapter is to be contradicted by that which follows, it is impossible to allege that the subsequent statement of the Confession can bear a meaning which countenances or abets persecution for conscience sake.

But, *in the second place*, the object aimed at in the subsequent statements of the chapter is not at all to determine what or where the limits are, beyond which liberty of conscience ceases, but to assert that there *are* limits, where the authority which God has appointed comes in to restrict the right.

In the history and tenets of the Sectaries during the time of the Commonwealth, the authors of the Confession had had but too familiar and painful experience of the mischievous consequences resulting from what they call "the pretence of Christian liberty." There were not wanting men at that period who interpreted the right of conscience so as to be inconsistent with the lawful exercise of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical,—accounting that the plea of conscience, when urged by any man, justified him in resisting both the commands of the civil magistrate and the authority of the Church.[2] And it was necessary to assert the

[1] Conf. c. xx. 2.

[2] The Sectaries who during the civil wars used the watchwords of "liberty of conscience" and "universal toleration," in behalf of views which the authors of the Westminster standards felt bound to oppose as in the highest degree destructive of civil and ecclesiastical order, may be divided into four classes: 1. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against all Church authority,

doctrine, that these two—conscience on the one hand, and lawful authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, on the other—are not really inconsistent with each other, that they are equally ordinances of God, and that they are designed by Him not to contradict, but only to limit each other. On the one side, authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is not absolute and unrestricted; for it is limited by the rights of conscience on the part of the members both of the state and Church. On the other side, the rights of conscience are not absolute and unrestricted either; for they are met and limited by authority both civil and ecclesiastical. It is this doctrine—important at all times, but especially so at the time of the Westminster Assembly — which it is the main object of the authors of the Confession in the subsequent part of this chapter to inculcate. Accordingly they tell us: "They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practise any sin or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian

—such as the Brownists, who held that no man should be brought under Church discipline or excommunicated for any action or opinion in behalf of which he could urge that plea. 2. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against all civil authority,—such as the Fifth Monarchy men, who demanded universal community of goods and levelling of ranks, and "the world to be put under the feet of the saints." 3. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against the practical authority of the law of God,—such as the Antinomians, who maintained that the moral law was buried in the grave of Christ, and was no longer binding upon a Christian man as a rule of duty. 4. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against the authority of God as a standard of belief conveyed to us in the Scriptures,—such as the Libertines, who asserted that all opinions were alike innocent, if only held conscientiously.

A full account of the dangerous and often most blasphemous and repulsive forms in which the views now referred to found expression, and of the feelings with which pious men regarded them at the time, may be seen in Thomas Edwards' *Gangræna*, first and second part, 3d ed., preface and pp. 15–34; third part, London 1646, pp. 2–16. Baillie's *Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time*, London 1645, chap. i.–vi. It was not unnatural that the extravagant claims put forth by the Sectaries for an absolutely unlimited toleration and liberty of conscience should lead to a reaction on the other side. Accordingly we find that Rutherford, Dickson, and Fergusson, in writing against such views, in some instances went too far, and laid down positions which were indefensible, and really involved persecution. Their errors on this subject mainly arose from their holding that the Jewish political laws were of permanent obligation, and consequently that capital punishment might still be lawfully inflicted for such offences as idolatry. Rutherford, *Pretended Liberty of Conscience*. Fergusson of Kilwinning, *Brief Refutation of the Errors of Toleration, Erastianism, Independency, and Separation*, Edinr. 1692, sec. ii. pp. 47–85. David Dickson, *Truth's Victory over Error*, chap. xx. Qu. 4. M'Crie, *Miscellaneous Writings*, Edinr. 1841, pp. 468–486, 502–512. Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly*, Edinr. 1843, pp. 150–157. 351–362. [Compare also Mr. Palmer's arguments in favour of persecution. *Treatise on the Church*, vol. ii. pp. 335, 363–370.]

liberty; which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God." The great object of the Confession in this part of the chapter is to lay down the doctrine that *there are limits* to the rights of conscience,—limits necessitated by the ordinance of civil magistracy on the one hand, and ecclesiastical authority on the other, in their lawful exercise. *Where* those limits are to be laid down, it is not at all the object of the Confession to say. At *what point* the plea of conscience ceases to avail against the interference of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, our Confession does not profess to determine. That there *are* such limits it asserts; that there *is* such a point it affirms; although the answer to the question *where* those limits are to be drawn, or *where* the point of lawful interference is to be fixed, it does not take upon it the hazardous office of announcing. That there are certain limits to the right of liberty of conscience, and that there are opinions and practices, hostile to religion and civil society, which, although they may plead the argument of conscience in their behalf, may nevertheless be proscribed by the civil magistrate,—this is the fair amount of the doctrine enunciated. It does not decide the difficult question of how far the right of conscience may go or may not go in the way of arresting the interference of authority within Church or state. It does not decide what particular opinions or practices ought to be dealt with penally by the state. The object of its authors was accomplished in announcing the general doctrine that there are such limits, and that there are such opinions and practices; thereby contradicting the mischievous tenet, that conscience is a plea sufficient against the lawful exercise of all authority whatsoever. It would be very difficult, I think, indeed, to lay down the negative of the doctrine thus inculcated by the Confession of Faith.

In the third place, examples may be readily adduced of opinions and practices such as those pointed at by the Confession,

in regard to which few, or perhaps none, will deny that, in certain circumstances or emergencies, the civil magistrate "*may*," to use the terms of the Confession, "proceed against them" by his proper coercive power. The opinions and practices referred to in the Confession may be ranked under these three heads or classes: those "against the light of nature;" those "against the principles of Christianity;" and those "against the peace and order of the Church." Without stopping to illustrate the argument, it is enough to say, that perhaps no man will deny that the civil magistrate *may*, in certain circumstances (for the doctrine of the Confession does not make it imperative upon him), *may* proceed, for example, against incest, as a sin of the first class, against nature; against blasphemy, as a sin of the second class, against Christianity; and against the violation of the Sabbath, as a sin of the third class, against the peace and order of the Church.

These remarks may be sufficient to indicate the nature of the argument by which the standards of the Church may be vindicated against the charge alike of Erastianism and persecution, and be fairly interpreted as, in fact, in direct opposition to both.[1]

[1] M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, pp. 133–138.

PART II.—POWER OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOURCE OF CHURCH POWER, OR THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST.

WE have already had occasion to advert to the fact, that Christianity is not merely a personal religion, but in its very nature a social one; and that on the basis of the doctrines which He taught, our Lord laid the foundations of a spiritual society, which He gave warrant and instructions to His immediate followers fully to settle and complete. There is implied in the very idea of such a society, call it by the name of a Church, or kingdom of Christ, or what you will,—something in the shape of a power of order, or government, or authority, or law, as connected with it. Admit the existence of a community of a separate and peculiar kind, owing its origin to Christ on this earth, and you also admit the existence of some kind of power or authority, as from the very nature of the case connected with the community. It may be a power limited to its own members, and restricted to the single object for which the society exists; but some sort of power, or order, or jurisdiction, must exist in every regularly constituted society, of whatever kind, from the very nature of it.[1]

There seem to be at least two things implied in the simplest notion of an organized and regular society, which is in any degree independent and self-acting. *First*, it must have its *office-bearers*. Whatever may be the character and objects of the association, secular or sacred, and whatever be the manner in which its officers

[1] [Quemadmodum enim nulla urbs, nullusve pagus, sine magistratu et politiâ stare potest: sic Ecclesia Dei suâ quâdam spirituali politiâ indiget: quæ tamen a civili prorsus distincta est, eamque adeo nihil impedit aut imminuit, ut potius multum juvet ac promoveat. Ista igitur jurisdictionis potestas nihil aliud erit in summâ, quam ordo comparatus ad spiritualis politiæ conservationem.—CALVIN, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xi. 1.]

are appointed, whether by rotation, or succession, or election of the members, it is essential to every society of a regular and orderly kind, to have office-bearers to represent the mind of the community, to conduct its business, and to act on its behalf. It may be a society of a private kind, instituted for the advancement of science or art, or the transaction of ordinary affairs; or it may be a society of a public kind, like the state, instituted for the promotion or protection of the civil rights and interests of the commonwealth; but whatever it be, this, from the very nature of the case, seems to be essential to it, that the members at large should have organs who represent them, and are invested with something of their power and rights, and act on behalf of the whole. In other words, every society, be it what it may, must have its office-bearers. *Second*, it must have its *laws*, to bind both members and office-bearers, to regulate their conduct in reference to each other and to foreign parties, and to determine the course and order of their transactions as a society. For internal regulation and external action it is necessary, unless the society is to fall into utter confusion and disorder, fatal to its very existence as a community, that the doings both of its members and office-bearers should proceed upon some settled principles or fixed rules. This necessity is equally unavoidable, whether the society be a private or a public one, and whatever be the manner in which its laws are enacted, or the authority by which they are imposed. Come from what quarter they may, whether from internal or external sources, some regulations or fixed principles of action are necessary for every community, if it would exist or act at all.

These two things, then, are essential to every society, whatever be its nature or objects—namely, office-bearers of some kind, and laws of some kind; in other words, a general power for government, and order, and action in the society of some sort, and coming from some quarter or another.[1] And such a power we actually find to belong to the Church of Christ, in common with every other orderly society; and it is, in fact, equally as in the case of other societies, essential to its wellbeing, and even necessary to its existence. Without some such power the Christian Church must cease to exist as a society at all. Without determining anything at present about its nature, its extent, its limits, and its objects, we may safely lay it down as a principle not to be disputed, that

[1] Whately, *Kingdom of Christ*, 4th ed. pp. 92–95.

a power of order and action must belong to the Church of Christ, if it can be called in any sense of the term a society or community of Christians. It is regarding this power, existing in connection with the Christian society, that we are now, under the second general division of our subject, to proceed to inquire. That society must have its laws and office-bearers, like every other society. It must have something, in one form or other, that rightly bears the name of Church power. To this, considered generally, we are now to direct our attention. And in entering upon the examination of the grand subject of the power of the Church, the question that first meets us is, as to the *source* from which this power is derived. To this question, then, we now address ourselves.

There are examples, familiar to our minds, and exhibited to view every day, of two kinds of societies, each possessing within itself a power of government and action, but that power derived from different and opposite sources. *In the first place*, we have the familiar example of societies of a private and voluntary kind, associated together and instituted for the promotion of some object or interest not of a public nature in the large sense of the term, such as societies voluntarily established for advancing literature or science, or for transacting the secular and ordinary business of life. There is a certain power of self-government and self-action belonging to and exhibited by such societies. From what source is that power derived? The answer is obvious. The power of authority and action that they possess is derived from the voluntary consent and appointment of the members surrendering their own power, and committing it, under certain conditions or limitations, to a few selected from their number. There are office-bearers and laws in such private and voluntary societies, as there must be in all societies; but the office-bearers are appointed directly or indirectly by the consent of the members at large, and the laws are enacted and imposed by the society itself. The office-bearers act by a power delegated from the other members; and the laws are binding in consequence of an authority emanating from the whole body of the association. The society has its power within itself, self-regulated and self-acting; and the office-bearers act, and the laws are enforced, in virtue of an authority that emanates, more immediately or more remotely, from the society itself. Such is the nature of every private and voluntary association of

an independent kind. *In the second place*, we have the hardly less familiar examples, not of private, but of public societies instituted by and acting for the state, such as a bench of magistrates, or a court of justice, or an assembly of parliament or legislature. There is a certain power of action and authority exhibited by and belonging to such societies likewise. But in this case it is a power accruing to them, not from themselves, but from the state. Here, too, there are office-bearers and laws, as in the case of every other society. But the office-bearers are elected by the commonwealth, or appointed by the civil power; and the laws of their office and action are the regulations enacted and imposed by the state. Magistrates hold office and execute laws in virtue of the authority of the supreme magistrate. Judges preside in judgment, and interpret laws, in consequence of the same authority. And senators rule and frame laws, because of the authority given to them by the constitution of the state. Such is the nature of every public or state society. Its power of authority and action emanates from the state. These are the two kinds of societies with which we are most familiar, and which the experience of every day makes us acquainted with. They are examples of two different and widely separate sources from which the power of government and action, necessary to every society of whatever name or kind, may be derived. In the case of private and voluntary societies, that power emanates directly or indirectly from within itself. In the case of public societies not of a voluntary kind, that power emanates from the state from without.

Besides these two sources, from which the power of government and action essential to every organized society may be derived, is there, I ask, any other that can be named as giving the warrant for such power? Is there any other source, besides that of the consent and delegation of its members, and besides that of the commission and authority of the state, from which the power of government and action in a society may be derived? The Christian society has a power of government and action connected with it; but it disowns as the origin of its power both the one and the other of these sources. It draws its authority from a different and higher fountain than either. It claims a loftier origin for its jurisdiction.

I. The power of the Church is derived from a higher source than the consent or delegation of its members; it is of positive

institution and Divine warrant, and not from the same origin as that of a voluntary and private society.

In one sense, doubtless, the power of authority and action belonging to the Church is derived from the consent and permission of its members; for it is by their own voluntary act and choice that they become and continue members of the Church, and so place themselves under the administration of that power. In this respect, and it is an important one, Church power exists by the permission or consent of the members; and the Church has all the rights and standing of a merely private and voluntary association. But in addition to this, the power of the Church is directly from God, being exercised and enforced, not only or chiefly because of the permission or consent of its members, but because it is a positive Divine institution, apart altogether from that consent. The direct Divine appointment of Church power, as an ordinance of God in the Christian society, is cumulative and not privative of the existence of that power by the permission or approbation of its members. There is a positive institution by God in addition to the voluntary submission to it of man.

Now here we run counter to the fundamental tenet of the Quakers, who deny the authority of all the positive institutions of Christianity, and among the rest, of the power of order and government in the Christian Church, and who make that power, in so far as they are forced by the necessities of union and association among the members of the Church to acknowledge it, to consist in nothing more than that of any private and voluntary society. And we no less run counter to the views of the Latitudinarians, who, without adopting the Quaker theory, and denying *all* positive appointments in the Church, deny the special appointment of Church government as a Divine institution, holding that we have no warrant for it in the Word of God, and that it is a matter of mere human arrangement. Such doctrines are clearly and undeniably opposed to the abundant and varied evidence to be found in Scripture, that Church power is a positive Divine institution, having the direct warrant and commission of Christ. That it is so, the briefest reference to the statements of Scripture on the subject will suffice to show. *First*, We have the general fact of the Divine establishment of the Christian Church warranted in Scripture,—a society not instituted by the voluntary

association of its members, but by the express command of Christ. *Second*, we find the account of the appointment by our Lord of office-bearers for that society, and of these office-bearers, under the guidance of inspiration, after His removal, providing for a succession of them in the Church, by appointing and setting them apart in every particular congregation. *Third*, we have the enactment of laws for the Church, in the application of the Word of God, by inspired authority, to office-bearers and members, for the regulation of their conduct. *Fourth*, we have names given in Scripture to the office-bearers of the Christian society, and precepts and promises addressed to them, expressive in the most unequivocal terms of the office of authority and rule in the Church to which they had been divinely appointed, and not merely of an office of teaching and advising. *Fifth*, we have the corresponding duties of submission to office-bearers, and respect for their authority distinctly inculcated, as the duties of the members of the Church towards "those set over them in the Lord." And *sixth*, we have undeniable examples in Scripture of the exercise of a power, not of advice merely, or even of authority, wielded by the permission or appointment of the members, but of rule and authority by warrant and positive institution of God; the power, in short, of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven."[1]

On grounds such as these, which do not require to be illustrated in detail, because they must be familiar to every reader of Scripture, we are warranted to say, that there is a real power of authority and action belonging to the Christian Church, derived from a higher source than the consent or delegation of its members; and that, in addition to the rights it may have as a merely voluntary society, it has a power ordained by God for government among its members, and for the attainment of its ends as a Church of Christ. So clear and abundant is the evidence that the Christian Church is something more and higher than a voluntary association of Christians, and that the power of the Church is not merely the surrender, under certain limitations, of the rights of all the members into the hands of a few for the good of the society, but is rather the positive institution of Christ, having its origin and warrant directly from Him. In other words, the source of Church power is not in the members, but in Christ.

[1] [*Jus. Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part i. chap. i.]

II. The power of the Church is not derived from the commission and warrant of the state.

The Church of Christ, I have said, is not to be regarded simply as a Christian *Union*,—wielding any power that it does exercise at the will, and in consequence of the permission, of its members; neither is it to be regarded as a public or civil *Union*, administering no more than the power and commission of the state. It is of God, both in its origin and in its prerogatives,—*His* ordinance for administering *His* power among men. And because the power of the Church is from God, it cannot be from man viewed either as a member of the Church, or as a magistrate of the state. I have already indicated the grounds that we have in Scripture for believing that the power of the Church is not a power existing by the consent of its members, or in virtue of delegation from them, or at their discretion, as in the case of any private and voluntary society; but, on the contrary, that such power is an express and positive Divine appointment, having its source in Christ. And on exactly the same grounds in Scripture it may be demonstrated, that Church power is not derived from the delegation and commission of the state; and that the Church does not owe its authority to that civil warrant which, in the case of public or political societies, clothes their office-bearers with something of the state's prerogatives. The Divine origin and institution of Church authority exclude the possibility of a civil origin and institution of it. There may doubtless be the sanction and warrant of the state connected with the power of the Christian Church; and in every case in which the state knows its duty, it will seek to enter into alliance with the Church, and lend to its claims of power a civil recognition and warrant. But this warrant of the state to the power of the Church is cumulative, and not privative of its sanction by God. It is the warrant of the state added to the warrant of Divine institution. It is the recognition of the civil magistrate subjoined to the previous appointment of Christ. That recognition does not imply that the origin of Church power is from the state, but the very reverse: it amounts, in fact, to an acknowledgment that the source from which it emanates is Divine. And if, in addition to the statements of Scripture in regard to the express institution by our Lord of a power of authority and action in His Church, anything further were needed as evidence that it is not from the civil

magistrate, it would be found in the broad and clear line of distinction which is drawn in the word of God between the nature of the power vested in and exercised by the Church, and the nature of that other power vested in and exercised by the state. The deep and indelible distinction between "the things of God" and "the things of Cæsar" comes in to aid—if that were necessary—the evidence from the Divine institution of Church power; and both combine to demonstrate that the right of authority and action belonging to the Christian Church is not derived from the commission and warrant of the state, but is directly from Christ.[1]

III. The statements now made in regard to the origin and source of Church power necessarily involve the general proposition, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.

This form of expression is warranted by the explicit language of Scripture; and still more, the meaning of the expression is sanctioned by the whole tenor of Scripture declarations. The Church, as a society, owes its origin to Christ: it derives from Him its government and office-bearers; it receives from Him its laws and constitution; it draws from Him its spiritual influence and grace; it accepts at His hand its ordinances and institutions; it acts in His name, and is guided in its proceedings by His authority. In the expression that the Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, and in the fact that He is the only source of Church power, there is much more implied than that He is the founder of the Christian society. He is both its founder and its administrator,—being the ever present source of life and influence, of ordinance and blessing, of law and authority, of word and doctrine within the community. Through His Spirit, and His word, and His ordinances, alike of government and grace, Christ both originates and administers His Church upon earth. Is it the spiritual life of the Christian Church that is inquired of in regard to its source and supply? Christ is the Head of the Church as the source of life, breathing that spiritual breath into the body at the first, and holding it in being ever since. Is it the doctrine of the Church that is inquired after in regard to its origin and obligation? Christ is the Head of doctrine to His Church, having been Himself the unerring Teacher of wisdom and truth

[1] [*Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part i. chap. ix. *Vindication of the Presbyteriall Government and Ministry by the Ministers and Elders of the Province of London*, 1650, pp. 6–10.]

since the beginning, and still continuing to instruct His people savingly in all Divine knowledge by His word and Spirit. Is it the ordinances of the Church that you inquire about, in respect to their authority, and the blessing contained in them? Christ is the Head of the Church as to ordinances, having appointed them by His authority at first, and made them the channel of spiritual blessings to His people ever since. Is it the Divine grace connected with word and ordinance that you inquire after? Christ is the Head of His Church as to grace, immediately imparting it as He wills through His appointed ordinances, or by means of His Spirit, and thereby making the Church a living and gracious power in the souls of its true members. Is it the authority of the Church in its transactions and decisions that is inquired about; and is it asked whence has it this authority that it claims? Christ is the Head of His Church as to authority and government, speaking through its voice, and binding through its decisions, and making these His own, in so far as they are framed according to His mind and word. In all that regards its life and doctrine, and ordinances, and grace, and authority; in short, in all that belongs to the Church as a peculiar society on earth, we recognise its *Jus Divinum*—the presence and the power of its Divine Head. All is derived from Him; and all emanates from Him as its source. Within the province of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Teacher, Lawgiver, and Judge. If doctrine is taught, it is taught because He has revealed it; if ordinances are administered, they are administered in His name, and because they are His; if government is established and exercised, it is through His appointment and authority; if saving grace is dispensed, it is dispensed through the virtue and power of His Spirit; if a blessing is communicated, it is because He blesses. In the language of the Confession of Faith, "there is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

IV. The grand doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head of His Church, is to be differently understood according to the different senses in which the term Church is to be understood.

[1] Conf. c. xxv. 6. [Gillespie, *Brotherly Examination*, pp. 11–13. *Male Audis*. p. 30. *Presbyt. Armoury*, vol. i. *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*. B. ii. chap. v. *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part i. chap. v. *Vind. of Presbyt. Gov. and Min.* pp. 4, 5.]

It will be remembered that, at an early stage in our discussions, we had occasion to advert to the various significations in which the word Church was used in Scripture, and the different aspects under which the Christian society which goes by that name might be regarded. Now it is of some importance, in order distinctly to understand the doctrine of Christ's Headship over the Church, to look at it from the standpoint of the different characters in which the one and undivided Church of Christ may be regarded. Whether you speak of it as visible or invisible, as local or representative, in all its aspects and characters it is true that Christ is the Head of the Church; but it is true under somewhat different senses; and it may be well, for the sake of greater distinctness, that we should mark the difference. There is, *first* of all, the invisible Church, constituted and made up of the whole body of the elect throughout the world, chosen by the grace and renewed by the Spirit of God. Christ is the Head of the Church invisible; and, according to the spiritual character in which the members of it are to be considered, He is more peculiarly and appropriately to be regarded as the source of invisible and inward grace to them, although not, of course, to the exclusion of other benefits. There is, *secondly*, the visible Church, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the faith of Christ, and are joined to Him in a Church state, and who enjoy the provision of outward ordinance, and government, and order, which belongs to the visible society, without regard necessarily to their inward and spiritual relation to Christ. Christ is the Head of this visible Church, but in a somewhat different sense from that in which He is the Head of the Church invisible,—more peculiarly and appropriately as the Author and Administrator of that outward provision of word and ordinance, of government and discipline, which characterizes it; and as the Source of its laws and office-bearers, and of the external benefits and immunities which are enjoyed by its members. There is, *thirdly*, the Church local, consisting of the visible congregation of professing Christians assembled into a church for the worship of God and the enjoyment of ordinances in any given place,—itself a true Church, and a section or branch of the Church catholic or universal. Christ is the Head of the Church local as well as of the Church universal, although under a somewhat different aspect. He is the Head of every particular congregation, more peculiarly in the sense that

He is the Author of its privileges, both outward and spiritual, as a worshipping assembly,—giving to it pastors according to His mind, and the administration of ordinances in accordance with His Word, and making these a means of life and grace as well as external blessing to its members. There is, *fourthly*, the Church representative, made up of the delegated office-bearers or representatives of one or more congregations, and themselves associated together in a Church-court or Assembly, and acting for as well as representing the whole. Christ is the Head of the Church representative, as well as of the Church in every other character in which it is mentioned or regarded in Scripture; but He is so in a sense appropriate to itself. He is the Head of the Church representative more especially as regards the office which it is meant to sustain towards the members, as made up of the rulers and administrators of the affairs of the Christian society, —appointing the laws by which their conduct in the transaction of business is to be regulated,—giving them gifts and authority to rule,—authorizing and sanctioning their judicial decisions in His name,—and, as the Lawgiver in His Church, lending the stamp of His authority to their enactments, and ratifying them as His own. In whatsoever character, in fine, the Church is to be regarded, the Lord Jesus Christ is appropriately and specially its Head, varying the administration of His power, and authority, and grace, according to its various aspects of capacity or need. There are varieties of administration, but there is the same Head.[1]

Does the individual believer stand in need of the blessing peculiar to his case? It is enough: "The Head of every man is Christ." Does the Church representative stand in need of gifts for government and administration suitable to its character, as the acting and executive body in the Christian society? It is enough: "The Lord is its Judge; the Lord is its Lawgiver; the Lord is its King, He will bring salvation." Does the Church local or congregational stand in need of the blessing appropriate more especially to it, as a worshipping assembly of believers? It is enough: Christ is "the Minister of the Sanctuary," and "the Chief Bishop of Souls," and the great "Master of Assemblies." Does the Church visible stand in need of the gifts of the ministry, ordinances, and oracles of God—the outward provision of govern-

[1] [Gillespie, *Notes of Proceedings of Westminster Assembly*. pp. 109, 110. *Presbyterian Armoury*, vol. ii.]

ment and order necessary to its wellbeing as a visible society? It is enough: "When He ascended up on high, He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Does the Church invisible wait to be refreshed with invisible communications of grace when it is weary? It is enough: "Christ is the Head of the body, the Church, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." If there be any virtue or any blessing in the power given to the Christian Church, it is all summed up in these words of the Confession: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ." [1]

There is a distinction, sufficiently familiar to us all, which may help us to a more thorough understanding of the great doctrine we are now discussing. I mean the distinction between the *founder* of a society and the *administrator* of a society. A man may be the founder of a society in the sense of giving to it its origin and existence, impressing upon it its original character and constitution, arranging its office-bearers, and framing its laws; so that the society shall stand related to him as its author. And yet the founder may not be the administrator of the society. He may leave the society, once summoned into existence by his efforts, to act for itself in future; or he may hand over the entire power and administration of its affairs to another, who shall preside over it in his stead, and become its real ruler. Now, in asserting that Christ is the Head of the Christian society, we mean not that He is the founder of it only, or the administrator of it only, but that He is both at one time. Christ is the Founder of the Christian Church, in the sense that He gave it its origin at first, that He impressed upon it its character and arrangement,—that He laid down the framework of its government and order,—that He appointed to it its laws and office-bearers and ordinances,—that He invested it, in short, with the peculiar form and the peculiar constitution that distinguish it as a society; and He did all this in a far higher sense than any in which these acts can be attributed to the founder of any human society. But more than this. Having at first impressed a certain constitution and character upon the spiritual society, He did not thenceforward aban-

[1] Conf. xxv. 6. [*Lectures on the Headship of Christ*, Edinr. 1840, Lec. ii. vi.]

don it to proceed according to the law or nature thus imparted to it. He gave to the Church at first a form of order and government, but did not after that cease His connection with it, and leave it alone to exercise and wield that power in its own strength and according to the regulations He had prescribed. He did not deposit with the Church, or in the ordinances of the Church, or with its office-bearers, a store of grace, which should be dispensed in future apart from Himself. He is not only the Founder of the Christian Church; He is also the Ruler and Administrator of it, in such a way that He keeps in His own hand all the power and authority and grace that belong to the society, and is ever present directly and with His own hand to exercise that power, to administer that authority, and to dispense that grace. He is the Head of the Church *in this sense*, that the Church is not only indebted to Him for its existence at first, but for its life and well-being ever since; *in this sense*, that it is not the Church that governs and dispenses ordinances and spiritual graces in His name, and by reason of His original gift and endowment to her, but Christ who, personally present, governs and administers ordinances and blessing through the Church. The Church has no store of life apart from Christ being in it; the ordinances of the Church have no deposit of grace apart from Christ present with them; the office-bearers of the Church have no gift of power, or authority, or action, apart from Christ ruling and acting by them. It is most important to remember that it is in this high and very peculiar sense that we are to understand the expression, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.

Such, then, is the source of the power of the Church,—using the word power in its most comprehensive sense, to denote not merely a power to act in the way of authority and rule, but also, in addition to this, a power to act in every way in which it is competent for the Church as a Church to act; a power, namely, to act in the way of spiritual jurisdiction, in the way of administering word, and ordinance, and discipline, in the way of dispensing grace to its members.[1] The source of all this power

[1] ["Ecclesiastica potestas est jus sacrum ministeriale a Christo Capite Ecclesiæ concessum, et ordinario modo applicatum, externe se et sua gubernandi ad mutuam ædificationem et salutem. . . . *Subjectum* adequatum est Ecclesia externa, visibilis, et instituta, quâ talis, in collectione suâ considerata. *Objectum*, quod idem et terminus, est cura ac gubernatio personarum et rerum suarum, seu res, personæ, actiones ecclesiasticæ et sacræ. *Efficiens* institu-

belonging to the Christian society is in the Lord Jesus Christ, as its ever present and ever living Head. This cardinal doctrine lies at the foundation of every other that concerns the Church of Christ, and ought to be guarded from those that would deny or derogate from it, with the utmost jealousy and care. It is so very explicitly and broadly laid down in Scripture, that few are found to controvert it in so many words, or expressly to deny that the Head of the Christian Church is Christ Himself. But without denying it in express terms, there are many systems of religious belief, and many societies bearing the name of Churches, that are found to trench upon this doctrine understood in its fulness and integrity, and practically to interfere with the rights and prerogatives that belong to Christ's Crown. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of some of those systems that detract from or deny the prerogatives of our Lord, as Head of the Church and the source of all Church power.

1*st*. The rights belonging to the Headship of Christ over His Church are interfered with or detracted from by the system of Erastianism, which ascribes to the civil magistrate a power within the Christian Church, and a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things.

If, to borrow the well-known and striking language of Andrew Melville, "there be two kings and two kingdoms" within the bounds of every Christian country,[1] then for the civil ruler to pass beyond the line that divides them, to trespass within the dominion of Christ, to assume jurisdiction there, and to interfere between Him and His subjects, is plainly to touch very nearly

tionis est Christus Mediator, quâ talis, ut Rex spiritualis et Caput Ecclesiæ." —VOETIUS, *Politica Ecclesiastica*, tom. i. lib. i. tract. ii. cap. i. 2.]

[1] "Sir, we will always humbly reverence your Majesty in public; but since we have this occasion to be with your Majesty in private, and since you are brought in extreme danger both of your life and crown, and along with you the country and the Church of God are like to go to wreck, for not telling you the truth and giving you faithful counsel, we must discharge our duty, or else be traitors both to Christ and you. Therefore, Sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again must I tell you, there be two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is King James, the head of this commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member."—M'CRIE, *Life of Andrew Melville*, vol. i. 2d ed. p. 391. ["Nam illa jurisdictio in animo interiori sedem habet; hæc autem externos mores duntaxat componit. Alterum vocare nobis licebit regnum spirituale: alterum regnum politicum. . . . *Sunt enim in homine veluti mundi duo, quibus et varii reyes et variæ leges præesse possunt.*"—CALVIN, *Inst.* lib. iii. cap. xix. 15.]

the honour of Christ's Crown. The civil magistrate denies or detracts from the right of Christ as Head of His Church, when he interferes with those matters in the Church in which Christ claims to act Himself, or usurps that authority which Christ claims to exercise Himself. For example, the doctrine professed and published by the Christian Church is binding upon the conscience of its members, and claims to be believed, not only because it is true in itself, but also because it is the truth revealed and imposed by its Divine Head; and the civil magistrate may interfere with the prerogatives of Christ as Head, when he presumes to dictate to the Church another doctrine than Christ has dictated, or to impose upon the conscience a creed which, although true in itself, is nevertheless imposed as an article of belief by his authority. Again, the ordinances and positive institutions of the Church demand the obedience and observance of its members, not merely because of their own virtue as conducive to the wellbeing of the Christian society, but because they are Christ's, and are prescribed by Him; and the civil magistrate may encroach upon the privileges of His Headship, when he assumes a power to dictate in regard to the rites and worship and order of the Church, imposing on the conscience, instead of Divine institutions, the ordinances and commandments of men. Once more, the government and jurisdiction of the Church are authoritative, only in so far as through them the Church enforces the laws of Christ, and He speaks through its decisions; and the civil magistrate may encroach upon His authority, when he assumes a jurisdiction in spiritual matters which belongs to Christ, and in controversies of faith and matters of government reviews or reverses decisions which are spoken or ratified by Christ's command. In such ways as these, the civil magistrate may usurp to himself an authority within the Church of Christ, which is inconsistent with the authority which properly belongs to its Head alone.[1]

This usurpation by the civil magistrate of proper jurisdiction within the Christian Church, is not less an encroachment upon the kingly rights of its Divine Head, that it may be perpetrated by a *Christian* magistrate. One great argument of Erastians,

[1] [*Lectures on the Headship of Christ*, Edin. 1840. Hugh Miller, *Headship of Christ*, Edin. 1861, pp. 2–64, 500–517. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 272–285. Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. i. tract. ii. cap. ii. 9. Hauber, Art. "Kirchenverfassung" in *Herzog's Real-Encyklopädie*, pp. 686–8.]

and a common apology for allowing some sort of power to the civil magistrate in spiritual things, is drawn from the consideration that in countries professedly Christian the chief ruler must have a power about the Christian Church, not proper or competent in countries and with rulers not professedly Christian, but rather opposed to Christianity. Now this apology is an extremely hazardous one, and derives no countenance either from the Word of God or from the standards of our Church. The right of the civil magistrate in connection with religion is not derived from the personal character of the magistrate, but from the nature of his office; and the extent and limits of that right cannot be determined by the accident of his Christianity or the reverse. The duty of the civil magistrate to aim at the glory of God and the advancement of the cause of religion, is founded on the office of magistracy as a Divine ordinance, and not on the faith or infidelity of the person who fills the office; and with this competency of the state to take some steps in behalf of the Church, and with the limits of this competency, the Christian profession of the state has, strictly speaking, nothing to do. In Scripture it is certain that "the powers that be" are spoken of as "ministers of God for good" to the Church as well as to the community; and that without reference to the fact of their being professedly Christian or not. Nay, they are so spoken of, when "the powers that be" were not Christian, but the persecutors of Christianity.[1] And it is no less certain that, in the Confession of Faith, the right and duty of the civil magistrate to aim at the interests and advancement of the Church, are not restricted to the single case in which the magistrate and the state are Christian.[2] There can be no doubt, indeed, that when both the people and the civil magistrate adopt a profession of Christianity, there will be many things which he can and will do on behalf of the Christian Church, not within his power in other and opposite circumstances. But it is important to remark that the duty of the magistrate *circa sacra* is a duty connected with the office, and not with the man; and that it is neither cancelled nor diminished by the circumstance that he has failed in the still more essential duty of embracing Christianity for himself. Nor, on the other hand, is the duty or the right of the civil magistrate in connection with the Christian Church created or increased by the fact that both himself per-

[1] Rom. xiii. 1–7. [2] Conf. c. xxiii.

sonally, and the state that he represents, are professedly Christian. His opportunities and his means for promoting the interests of religion in general, and of the Christian Church in particular, may indeed be incalculably augmented, and his willingness or desire to do so may for the first time be called forth, *when* he himself, as well as the nation over which he rules, come under the influence of Christianity. But his obligation, as in the sight of God to seek to advance His cause, was not at that moment created; and his right to interfere on behalf of the Church was not even then enlarged or extended. As a Christian magistrate, he has not other or higher rights from his office than what he possessed when not Christian; nor does his faith personally give him a larger or stronger title to interfere in regard to the Church of Christ. The apology or argument so often resorted to by Erastians, both in former and more recent times, to justify the ascription of authority to the civil magistrate in spiritual things, that the state is a Christian state, is no real or valid justification of it. Because the state is professedly Christian, and the magistrate a Christian magistrate, we are not warranted to ascribe to him an authority which can belong only to Christ. The Christianity of the state does not in the least tend to abolish or even lessen the essential distinction, which in all circumstances must subsist, between the state and the Church; nor does the religious profession of the magistrate tend in the smallest measure to give him the place or the commission of an office-bearer within the Christian Church. The assumption by the state of proper jurisdiction within the Church of Christ, whether in the case of a Christian nation or a nation not Christian, must ever be equally an encroachment upon the rights of its Divine Head.[1]

2d. The doctrine of the Headship of Christ is denied or detracted from by the Popish system, which ascribes to the Bishop of Rome authority within the Church inconsistent with the sovereignty of Christ as its Head.

It is not on the ground of the claim made by the Pope to be regarded as universal bishop within the Christian Church, that this charge rests. If such an office as that of universal bishop

[1] [Gillespie, *Brotherly Examination*, pp. 10–13. *Nihil Respondes*, pp. 6–10. *Male Audis*, pp. 16–18, 21, 27 f. *Presbyterian Armoury*, vol. i. *CXI. Propositions*, Prop. 44, 49, 68, 80, 95–100. *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. ii. chap. vi. vii.]

had ever existed or been sanctioned by the Word of God, it might have been consistent with the Headship of Christ. But the prerogatives which are attributed to the office, and the powers which according to the system of Popery are vested in it, are such as to be wholly inconsistent with the Headship of Christ, and to constitute a daring usurpation of that Headship by a creature. I have had occasion before now, in the course of our discussions, to remark that, according to the system of Romanists, the very office and powers which Christ when on earth held as Mediator, have been transferred by Him since His departure to the visible Church; that He has devolved upon the Church His own incommunicable rights and prerogatives to exercise in His room on behalf of men; and that the Church, filled with His Divine fulness, discharging His functions towards the world, and standing in His stead, is in its office and character the living embodiment of the office and character of its absent Head.[1] In other words, the Church now, and in reference to men, is as much the Prophet, Priest, and King, as was Christ Himself when He was upon earth. There is a difference indeed on this point between the opinions of that party in the Church of Rome who, strictly speaking, may be called Papists, and that other party who may more correctly be termed Roman Catholics. The former, or the Papists, hold that all these powers and prerogatives are vested in the Pope personally; while the latter, or the Roman Catholics, hold that they are vested not in the Pope individually, but in the Pope in conjunction with a General Council, as representing the Church at large.[2] The difference, however, in regard to our present argument is immaterial. The ascription to the Pope individually, or to the Pope "cum Concilio," of such offices and powers as once confessedly were Christ's, is an impious assumption of His place, and a daring encroachment on His sovereignty. The Lord Jesus Christ still exercises in His own proper person, and by His own real presence amid His Church, the whole of those offices which He once as Mediator assumed. He has neither abdicated His functions, nor been dethroned from His place as Mediator; and this day He is in the midst of the Church as much the unerring Prophet, and the efficacious Priest, and the Supreme King personally, as when He once discharged those offices on earth. To assert otherwise were to assert that He had

[1] Vide *supra*, pp. 85–87. [2] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 211 ff.]

ceased to be the Head of His Church altogether, and was no longer to be accounted the Mediator. And to this impious doctrine the pretensions of the Church of Rome actually amount. It matters not whether, according to one party, the offices of Christ be transferred from Him to the Pope and the Church conjointly, or whether, according to another party, they be transferred from Him to the Pope alone. To pretend that Christ has devolved His incommunicable office on a creature,—to assert that the Lord Jesus has abdicated His functions in favour of a man,—to assume that the Head of the Church has divested Himself of His powers, and entrusted them to a mortal,—this is, in the most express and undisguised terms, to deny the prerogatives and rights of His Headship, and to take possession of them in the name of Antichrist. And such, in their full extent, are the claims and doctrines put forth on behalf of Rome. That Church, according to the tenets of its adherents, is the unerring Prophet, to declare infallibly the will of God, and interpret the doctrine of His word, and to judge between truth and falsehood. That Church is the effectual Priest, to make the sacrifice day by day that is necessary for the remission of sin, and to present the prevailing intercession for the sinner. That Church is the supreme and sovereign King over the consciences and the obedience of men, giving or withholding the gift of grace according to its pleasure, creating and dispensing with laws at its will, and seated upon the throne of universal supremacy. Who can deny that this is to assume the very office of Christ upon earth, to refuse to Him His blood-bought crown, and to dethrone Him to whom alone the Headship of His Church belongs, that a usurper may become the Head in His place.[1]

[1] ["From our letters of Sept. 16, 1864, and Nov. 8, 1865," says the present Pope, writing to the Romanist bishops in England, "it is clearly and openly manifest that no one can belong to the true Church of Christ unless he firmly adhere by free subjection of mind and heart, and open confession of the lips, to the Chair of Peter and the Roman Pontiff, who has been divinely constituted by Christ our Lord Himself as successor of Peter, Head of His whole Church, the centre of unity, and Pastor with supreme power of feeding both lambs and sheep. God grant it, Venerable Brothers, that these unhappy wanderers" (the English High Church Unionists, etc.) "may abjure their errors, and see the light of Catholic Truth, and hasten to the only fold of Christ."—Manning, *England and Christendom*, London 1867, pp. lxxvii. 143–145, 185–209. Bellarmine, *Opera*, tom. i. *Præf. de Summo Pontifice*, etc., tom. ii. lib. iii. cap. xiv., etc. Buckley, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, London 1851, pp. 52, 53, etc., 278–280.]

3d. The rights of the Headship of Christ, if not denied, are detracted from by the semi-Romanist doctrine, that Christ has given to the Church a deposit of power and grace, which the Church has authority to use and administer by itself.

This is a doctrine common to all classes of High Churchmen, and may be regarded as a sort of half-way house between Popery on the one hand and Protestantism on the other. It is the doctrine of Popery taken in its true extent, that Christ has devolved *all* His offices and powers on men, and that the Church has warrant and endowment for the exercise and discharge of them all. It is the doctrine of Protestantism taken in its true extent, on the other hand, that Christ has devolved *none* of His offices on men, and that the Church in no measure is warranted or endowed to exercise any of them; for this reason, that these offices are personal and incommunicable, and that Christ in person, and by His actual presence in the Church, still singly and completely discharges them Himself. But there is a doctrine intermediate between Popery and Protestantism, held by High Churchmen of all parties, that Christ has in *some* degree, although not wholly or altogether, devolved upon men His peculiar offices; and that, to some extent at least, the Church has been commissioned and qualified to exercise them. They hold that Christ has bestowed upon the Christian Church a certain measure of power and grace, as a gift to be enjoyed apart from Himself,—a deposit, as it were, in the Church's hands, to be used and dispensed at its own discretion, and independently of Christ. Now such a doctrine as this, although not so avowedly as the Popish dogma, yet not less really, derogates from the rights of Christ as Head. It denies that all power connected with the Church is kept in the hands of its Divine Head; and that in its actings and proceedings, its office-bearers are not so much acting themselves, as that Christ is acting by them. It denies that all grace belonging to the Church, and enjoyed by its members, is communicated to the members by Christ Himself directly and personally; and that the blessing they receive is not the gift in any proper sense of the Church itself, but only of Christ blessing them through it. Such a doctrine of a deposit of blessing and power in the Church, to be used and dispensed by itself, virtually excludes Christ, to that extent, from His office of acting and blessing through the Church. In whatever form or with whatever modification it may be held, it is

derogatory to the office and exclusive claims of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of His Church.

First, there is one party of semi-Romanists, or High Churchmen, who hold that there is a deposit of *grace* in the Church, which Christ has given and authorized His servants to dispense. In this form of the doctrine it is believed and maintained by the advocates of Sacramental grace and priestly virtue, those who declare that in the ordinances themselves, or in the ministers who dispense them, there resides a gracious influence apart from the communion of the soul in such ordinances with Christ. Such a principle as this is universal among Tractarians in the present day, and indeed is common to High Churchmen in every age. With regard to the Sacraments of the Church, they believe that Christ has deposited in them a certain grace apart from the relation of the soul to Christ when enjoying them, and that He has limited to the outward institutions of His Church, and the sensible signs in the Sacraments, a spiritual and efficacious influence, separate from the blessing of Christ conveyed through them as channels. With regard to the offices of the Church, in like manner, they hold that grace is tied to the office itself, apart from Christ by His own presence and in His own person giving the blessing, not to the office, but through it. Hence the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration and Sacramental Grace; hence the doctrine of a real priestly virtue in the office of the ministry; a blessing, in short, deposited in the sign, or the form, or the institution, separate from the communion of the soul with Christ through the channel of such ordinances. In this system, Christ is displaced from the position He occupies as the ever present Head of the Church, and so, in virtue of His presence, not giving to the Church a certain store or deposit of grace to be used apart from Himself, but rather following out day by day His mediatorial work on its behalf, and *as the present Head*, by His own personal act, and from His own hands, dispensing every blessing enjoyed through ordinances. The doctrine of High Churchmen on this subject avowedly substitutes the sinner's union to the Church, or communion in the ordinances of the Church, for the sinner's union to Christ, and leads the soul to seek in fellowship with outward institutions for that grace which can be found by it only in fellowship with Christ. The deposit of grace is not in the Church, but in the Divine Head of the Church; and to the

extent that the Church professes to have a treasury of blessing of its own, and to dispense the blessing itself, to that extent it is trenching upon the prerogatives of Christ as the Head.[1]

Second, there are many semi-Romanists or High Churchmen who hold that there is a deposit of *knowledge* in the Church; and that Christ has authorized His servants to dispense it for the benefit of its members. Such virtually is the doctrine of those who, in addition to the teaching of Christ by His Word and Spirit, maintain that the Church is the authorized teacher, if not to supplement the instructions of Christ, at least to interpret them. This doctrine may be held under various forms and modifications. It may verge towards the Romish doctrine of the equal authority of ecclesiastical tradition with that of the inspired Word of God, and of the paramount necessity of an infallible Church to interpret infallibly the Scriptures. Or, without claiming infallibility, it may assign to the Church the office of exclusively, or at least authoritatively, interpreting the Word of God for its members, and of imposing its teaching on their consciences. In whatever form the doctrine is held, which assigns to the Church a deposit of knowledge apart from the ever present and ever active teaching of Christ Himself, it undoubtedly trenches on His office of Head.

It is no doubt true, that one of the great duties the Church has to discharge in the world, is the duty of a teacher, but not of a teacher separated at any moment or in any way from the teaching of Christ. It is the duty of the Church to declare the doctrine and preach the Gospel of Christ; but her teaching is only in so far and no further saving and authoritative as it is Christ teaching through her. In no other way can the Church be said to teach at all. Anything beyond this, or anything besides this, is to assume an office not belonging to her,—the office, in fact, of the great Teacher Himself. Christ has never ceased in any sense, or at any time, to be the Prophet of His Church; but the work of instruction He keeps in His own hands. He has given neither to the Church, nor to the office of the ministry in the Church, a deposit of wisdom and knowledge apart from Himself. In all the teaching of the Church or of its ministers which is not unauthorized and presumptuous, it is Christ Himself that teaches by His Word and Spirit. And for the Church to claim to itself

[1] [Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, Lond. 1838, vol. i. p. 54 f. Goode, *On the Eucharist*, Lond. 1856, vol. i. chap. ii.]

an authority or power to teach, apart from Christ present and speaking in it, is to that extent to derogate from His office as Head.[1]

Third, there are many semi-Romanists and High Churchmen who hold that there is a deposit of *authority* committed to the Church; and that its office-bearers have the right to administer it. Such virtually is the principle involved in the tenets of those who maintain that the Church has a right in any respect to add its own laws to Christ's, or to go beyond, in matters of government, or worship, or discipline, or jurisdiction, the exact limits of what He has enacted. The Church can have authority only in so far as it speaks with the voice of its Head; and its decisions can be valid and its enactments binding, only in so far as they are given and enacted by Him. As King, and Ruler, and Judge, Christ is still in the midst of His Church. The power and jurisdiction which it claims must, in every case of its exercise by the office-bearers of the Church, come directly and immediately from Him. It were a mistake here, as elsewhere, to think that Christ, having settled the constitution and laws of His Church, and appointed its rulers, ceased any longer to interfere; and that, having given to them a supply or deposit of authority at first, He left them to rule and act for themselves under His name. His own authority in the Christian Church, Christ still keeps in His own hands; and out of the fulness of power in Himself, He personally rules in every act of authority or jurisdiction validly and lawfully done by His servants on earth. Their authority as rulers in the Christian society is not theirs, but His; and their decisions or laws enacted in spiritual or ecclesiastical matters are only to that extent, and no further, valid and binding, that they embody His decisions and enactments. For men to attempt, then, to decree what Christ has not decreed,—to enact laws of their own, in addition to His,—to add to His appointments in the Church,—to dictate rites and ceremonies and obligations which He has not recognised,—this is to assume a power not theirs, and to trespass on the office of the Head.[2]

Such are some of the ways in which the great doctrine of the

[1] [Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, vol. ii. pp. 10, 23, 46, 96 f., 110–133. Goode, *Rule of Faith*, Lond. 1842, vol. i. chap. ii. iii. vii., vol. ii. chap. xi.]

[2] [Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, vol. ii. pp. 64–75. Wordsworth, *Theoph. Angl.* 8th ed. pp. 350–362.]

Headship of Christ may be denied or derogated from. That doctrine may be practically denied or set aside by the state, when it takes to itself in any way or to any extent the office of Christ within the Church, and exercises jurisdiction in spiritual things. That doctrine is not less practically denied or set aside by the Church, when it takes to itself the office of Christ, and claims for its office-bearers or its ordinances a power that is incommunicable, and personally His own. The state and the Church on these occasions may both be acting in the name of Christ, when they thus usurp His prerogatives, and put themselves in His place. It may be a professedly Christian state, that in His name enters within a province and trespasses into an office that belong only to the Church's Head. Or it may be a professedly Christian Church acting in His name, which forgets that its own place is ministerial and Christ's supreme, and assumes to itself an office confined to its exalted Head. The sin of Erastianism, or at least the principle of evil involved in the sin, is not confined to civil magistrates *not* Christian, or confined to civil magistrates at all. It may be perpetrated by the Christian magistrate who brings the sword of Cæsar within the precincts of the sanctuary of God, even when he comes to worship there. It may be perpetrated by the Church itself, without Cæsar's sword, when within the sanctuary it takes the seat of Christ, and thrusts itself into His office. Whether it be a civil or ecclesiastical usurpation of His power, it is Erastianism in principle, and equally trenches upon the great doctrine of Christ's Headship over His Church.

CHAPTER II.

THE RULE OR LAW OF CHURCH POWER.

It has been already remarked, that there are *two* things that belong to the Church of Christ, as they must, from the very nature of the case, belong to every organized society, whatever be its nature or objects,—namely, *office-bearers* of some kind, and *laws* of some kind. The first, or office-bearers, are necessary to represent the society, and act on its behalf; and the second, or laws, are necessary, in order that they may act upon some fixed principles, and according to some settled order or system. At this stage in the progress of our investigations, it might perhaps have been natural for us to have taken up, in the first instance, the subject of the office-bearers of the Christian society, before entering upon the question of the rule by which their proceedings are ordered and defined. But it would be impossible to discuss the former topic, without considering the whole subject of the form and constitution and government of the Christian Church, —a discussion that demands, and must receive, a separate and more lengthened treatment. I have preferred, therefore, to postpone the subject of the office-bearers of the Church for the present, and to set it apart, along with the general question of the government and framework of the Church, for a subsequent and separate department of our inquiries. In the meantime, and in connection with the general head of Church power, it is proper to consider whether there is any rule by which that power is to be exercised and administered; and if so, what is the law binding upon the parties who have commission from Christ to act on behalf of Himself in His Church. The question of who those parties are, will be taken up at a subsequent period, and under a head of its own. But at present, our object is to ascertain if *any* fixed rule, and if so, *what* rule has been laid down for the purpose

of regulating the use and administration of its power by the Church.

The first of these questions, or, Is there any fixed rule according to which the power of the Church is exercised? it is hardly necessary, after what has already been said, to stop to discuss. If the Church is a regular and organized society at all, it must have some kind of rule by which it acts and administers its functions. Without this, no society, much less the Christian Church, could long act, or even exist at all. And the only proper subject for discussion is the second of these questions, namely, What rule has been appointed or laid down for the regulation of the Church in the matter? It is not even necessary to delay, in order to inquire from what quarter, or by what party, such a rule for the guidance of the Church is enacted. The law for the regulation of the Church, in the exercise of its mysterious power, cannot come from the state; for we have already seen, that the state has no proper jurisdiction within the Church, or in spiritual things. It cannot come from the authority, or will, or appointment of the members of the Church itself; for we have already seen that the Church is not a mere voluntary society, deriving its origin and power from the consent and delegation of its members. The only quarter, therefore, to which we can look, in answer to the question, By whom has the law for the regulation of Church power been enacted? is to Him whom we have found to be both the Church's Founder and Ruler. The law for the use and exercise of Church power must necessarily come from the Divine source of it. And the only question that remains for our discussion, is the question, *What* is the law which Christ has ordained?

I. The rule for the use and administration of Church power is the Word of God.

The law of the state cannot be the law of the Church; because the authority of the civil magistrate is expressly excluded there. The will of its members or office-bearers cannot be the law of the Church; because it is not a private or voluntary society, subject to such authority. From the very nature of the Church, as subject to Christ its Head, His will must be the only rule for the guidance of the Church in matters in which it is called upon to act; and Christ's will is nowhere expressed or announced, except in the Bible. In common, indeed, with every moral and intelligent being, the Church, as a society, is placed

under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is responsible to Him; and whenever His mind is expressed, that expression must necessarily become the supreme law to the Christian society as much as to the individual. Upon the broad ground of Christ's authority over all as God, and the responsibility of all to Christ, whether they be individuals or societies, we are entitled to argue that the will of Christ, as made known in the Bible, in so far as it applies to ecclesiastical affairs, must be the law of the Church; and it would require a statute of limitation, an express warrant of exemption from Himself, to exclude the Church from its responsibility, in common with all its members, to His Word as its rule. When Christ speaks and commands through the Bible, it must, in so far as it is addressed to them, be the law of every creature and of every society. On this ground alone are we warranted to say, that the Word of God must, in so far as it bears on the Church, be the exclusive rule for its actings. But we have seen already, that the Lord Jesus Christ sustains a peculiar relation to the Church, which He does not sustain to individuals as such, or to other societies. He is the Head of the Christian society in a peculiar sense, and stands in the relation of Sovereign to the Church in a manner that He does not to any other party; and in this relation of Headship on the one hand, and subjection on the other, we see an additional ground laid for the general doctrine, that the will of Christ, as expressed in the Scriptures, must be to the Church its rule of action and duty. Over and above the responsibility of the Church, in common with every creature, to Christ, as Lord of lords, there is superadded in this case the peculiar responsibility of the Church to Christ, as its King and Head. By this double sovereignty of nature and of grace, the Church is under subjection to the Lord Jesus, and to His revealed will; and because He is the Head of the Church, which He has purchased with His own blood, in addition to being the common Lord and Sovereign of all, He has a twofold claim on its obedience. The will of Christ, then, as revealed and expressed in the Bible, must, in a sense stronger and more constraining than that in which it applies to individuals as such, or to other societies, be the law of the Church.

There is no way of evading this conclusion, or setting aside the general proposition now laid down, that the Church is bound in all that it does to take the Bible as the law or rule of its pro-

ceedings, except upon the latitudinarian theory, that the Bible has enacted no law on Church matters, and can therefore be no guide in regard to them. The adherents of the latitudinarian theory in regard to the Church, affirm that the Scriptures have laid down nothing precisely or authoritatively on the subject of the constitution, the government, or administration of the Church,—that it is in vain to look into its pages for a directory to guide us in the conduct of her affairs,—and that she has been left at liberty by her Divine Head to use her own discretion in matters ecclesiastical, as considerations of time, and circumstances, and varying expediency may dictate. Now, in reference to this objection to the general doctrine already announced, there are two concessions which may be made, and which it is important to note; but which, when made, still leave untouched the general principle that the Bible is the rule, and the only rule, for the exercise and administration of Church power.

1*st*. It must at once be conceded, and has indeed already been indicated, that it is only in so far as the Word of God bears directly or indirectly on the subject of the use and administration of Church power, that it can be considered as a law or rule for the Church in its peculiar office or duties. Of course it is not to be denied that there is much in the Scriptures which refers to the duty and responsibility in reference to God, not of the Church as a Church, but of individuals as such; and that there is a great deal there revealed, both as regards doctrine and practice, not applicable to the case of a Christian society in its collective character. Further still, it cannot be denied that there is no formal and separate directory drawn out in the Bible for the regulation of Church matters,—no code, as it were, of ecclesiastical law arranged and articled for the use and instruction of the Church. But, nevertheless, it is true that there is enough in the Word of God bearing on the subject, and that, too, expressed with sufficient precision, to constitute it a rule for the Church, and to lay down for its direction the mind of Christ in regard to the order and administration of His own house. These three propositions may be laid down in regard to the expression or announcement of the will of Christ in Scripture for the use and exercise of Church power in the Church. *First*, There are many particular regulations laid down expressly in the Word of God in regard to the nature of Church government, and the exercise and administration of Church

power in matters ecclesiastical. *Second*, There are many express examples given us under the authority and direction of inspiration, equally binding upon us as express precepts, in regard to the use and administration of Church power, and having this advantage over particular regulations, that they embody in instances and special cases the principles that are designed to regulate all similar cases, wherever or whensoever they may occur. *Thirdly*, When there are neither particular rules nor particular examples applicable in their general features to the cases that may occur in ecclesiastical matters, there are general principles, either expressly laid down in Scripture, or fairly and necessarily to be inferred from Scripture, bearing upon ecclesiastical power and administration, sufficient to constitute a rule for the Church in the use and application of the power which she has warrant to exercise.[1] These three propositions are true in regard to the expression of the will of Christ in Scripture, as forming a law or directory for the Church. A very slight acquaintance with the Word of God will suffice to suggest the evidence which it affords in support of them. And they are sufficient to bear out the general proposition, that there is enough in the Word of God to be, and which was intended to be, a distinct and complete guide for the Church in the exercise of its powers of action and administration. No doubt you will seek in vain in the Bible for a formal code of ecclesiastical law, such as a jurist might compile. But it is not true that a code for the regulation of the Church's affairs is utterly awanting in Scripture, or that it is not embodied there either in express rules, or relevant examples, or general principles applicable to every instance in which the Church may be called upon to act. There may be no formal and scientific directory of law, any more than there is a formal and scientific confession of faith revealed to us in Scripture. But after this concession is made, it is still true that the Word of God is the only and the all-sufficient rule of duty and direction for the Church.[2]

2*d*. The second concession to be made to those who deny that there is anything laid down in Scripture sufficient to be a rule to the Church in its government and discipline and administration

[1] [For a discussion by the author of the question of the relative obligation of Scripture *precepts*, *examples*, and *principles*, see Appendix E.]

[2] *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part i. chap. iv. vi. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 64–73.

generally, is this, that although there is not any discretion allowed to the Church itself in regard to its laws or its institutions, yet there is a discretion permitted to the Church in regard to matters simply of "decency and order." However difficult it may be to draw the line between them—and the difficulty probably has been not a little exaggerated—there is a distinction which, in one shape or other, must be recognised and admitted by all, between the fundamental laws and institutions revealed and appointed by Christ for His Church, and those matters of arrangement and circumstance and detail, which may be necessary for the carrying out those laws into execution day by day, or may be expedient for the proper observance of those institutions. There is a distinction, in short, which all must acknowledge at one point or other, wherever the line may be drawn, between principles essential to the existence and administration of the Church, and points accidental to the existence and administration of the Church. With regard to the former, or what is essential to the existence and use of Church power, the Scripture contains a rule complete and sufficient for all the purposes contemplated, and expressed either in direct precepts, or by particular examples, or through the announcement of general principles, all bearing on the subject. With regard to the latter, or the points accidental and not essential to the existence and administration of the Church, there is nothing expressed in Scripture directly; and something is to be left to the discretion of the Church and its office-bearers. Where and how the line is to be drawn between these two kinds of things, marking on the one side what is fundamental and distinctive in the laws and administration of the Church, and therefore revealed, and what on the other side is accidental and not peculiar, and therefore not revealed, it may be sometimes difficult to determine. But that, after the laws and institutions of the Church had been directly or indirectly revealed and appointed by Christ, there was some power left to the Church itself to fill in the details of arrangement and order and propriety, not essential but expedient to the former, there can, I think, be no doubt both from the statements and the silence, the utterances and the reserve of Scripture on the subject. As to such matters of order or expediency as, for example, the hour of public worship on the Sabbath, the order of the service, the number of the diets each Lord's day, the length of time appropriated to each,

and such like—all conducive more or less to the proper discharge of the duty connected with them, and all requiring to be fixed and arranged in one way or other—there can be no doubt that a discretionary power in determining them has been left open to the Church. To have fixed by positive law such details, would have been contrary to the whole analogy of Scripture, which deals far more largely in general principles than in special regulations or precepts.

It may indeed be thought to be a difficult or dangerous task to draw the line between what is fundamental and peculiar to the character and institution of the ecclesiastical body, and in regard to which no discretion has been left to it, and what is merely accidental, and not distinctive, though conducive to its convenience and order, in regard to which a discretion has been left to it. But the line of distinction, upon any theory of the Church, *must* be drawn. It is not for us, by the help of our own rules or principles, derived merely from human ideas or conceptions of what is essential or accidental, to draw it. The only safe and scriptural method of drawing the line of distinction, is to ascertain what the word of God declares to be essential on the one hand, and therefore directly fixed and appointed, and what subordinate and not peculiar on the other, and therefore left open to the discretion of the Church. The Scripture standard can alone determine the distinction; and it is only by the application of Bible examples and rules that the line can be drawn which shall decide where the discretion of the Church in such matters as these begins, and where it ends. The rule of the apostle is the clearest and most applicable, which seems to intimate that the discretionary authority of the Church is limited expressly to the things of "*decency and order*." "Let all things," says he, in reference to the liberty allowed to the Church in making arrangements in ecclesiastical matters, "Let all things be done decently, or in good form, and according to order" (εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν[1]).

These two concessions, if concessions they can be called, may and ought to be made to those who affirm that there is nothing explicitly laid down in the Word of God as to matters of ecclesiastical government, discipline, authority, and institution: that it cannot be a rule or directory in such things to the Church; and

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

that consequently the Church must be left very much to its own discretion in the framing of its constitution and the enactment of its laws. There is nothing in these two concessions to shake or set aside the general position which we have laid down in the first place, that the Word of God is the only and the all-sufficient rule for the use and administration of Church power.[1]

II. But admitting this doctrine to be incontrovertible, in what light, I ask, are we bound to regard the laws made by the Church itself, or by Church courts?

Reserving entire and untouched the general position, that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule for the use and exercise of Church power, the answer to this second question is, that the laws and enactments framed by the Church have no authority by themselves, except in so far as they are the laws or enactments previously laid down and revealed by Christ. There is a distinction not unfrequently made use of in regard to human laws, which may not inaptly be applied to the laws or enactments framed by the Church or its courts, in their relation to Christ's commands on the same subject. There are laws *declaratory* and laws *enactive*,—the former, or declaratory laws, involving in them no other or new authority beyond what is previously binding by the established constitution of the state, and being merely explanatory of that constitution, as applied to fresh or particular cases,—the latter embodying new restrictions or regulations not previously implied in the constitution, and involving on the part of the legislator a fresh exercise of authority. Now the laws framed and announced by the Church, or by Church courts, as binding in matters ecclesiastical, are declaratory and not enactive, involving, if they be valid at all, no new exercise of authority on the part of the Church, but limited to the object of explaining and applying the law previously uttered by Christ in reference to such matters. The office of the Church in relation to the laws of her Divine Head, is to explain, to declare, and to apply them, in reference to every fresh case that may occur, warranting or requiring her interference. Beyond this the legislative function of the Church does not extend. She has no power of legislation for herself, according to her own wisdom or discretion, but must be contented to abide within the limits of that constitution and

[1] *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part ii. chap. iv. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. i. pp. 29–45, vol. ii. pp. 47–50.

those laws appointed for her in the Word of God. To declare and apply these, to administer and enforce the authority of Christ within the bounds of His own appointment,—this is the office of the Church in the way of legislating for the guidance of her office-bearers and members. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are the Church's right, for the purpose of unlocking the sanctuary where the Book of the Divine law is laid up, but for nothing more. It is her right to take the Book, and read what Christ has written therein, and demand audience in His name for the laws which He has enacted. But to add to those laws is not her right, any more than to add to the Book itself. And when in any case, in her conduct and arrangement of ecclesiastical matters, it is necessary or expedient for the Church to assume the functions of legislation, and by her courts to frame and publish laws for the obedience of her members, these laws can be no more than declaratory, and not enactive.[1]

III. In what light are the office-bearers of the Church to be regarded, in accordance with the doctrine that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule of Church power?

The answer to this question is equally plain and obvious as in the former case. They are ministerial and subordinate, having no authority or discretion of their own, and being merely ministers or servants to carry out the will and execute the appointments of Christ. They are not masters to do their own will, or act at their own discretion, but servants, held bound to submit to the will and carry out the instructions of another. There is a magisterial and supreme authority in the Church; and there is a derived and subordinate authority, accountable to the former. The one belongs to Christ as Head of His Church, the only law or limit of His authority being His own will; the other belongs to the Church, or the office-bearers of the Church, the law or limit of their authority being the power intrusted to them by their Master, and the instructions given to them by Him. In reference to the office-bearers of the Church, of whatsoever place or authority in it, they, if they keep within their office, are but the instruments in the hands of Christ Himself, acting in His name, ruling by His authority, and carrying into effect no more than His instructions. It is true here, as in other respects, that "the disciple is

[1] [Turrettin, *Opera*, tom. iii. loc. xviii. Qu. 31. Apollonius, *Jus Majest. circa sacra*, pars ii. cap. iii.]

not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Their office is wholly ministerial; their authority is wholly derived and subordinate. They are not "lords over God's heritage," licensed to act according to their discretion or caprice, and independently of any authority but their own. They are not free to administer word, or ordinance, or authority, as from themselves, and independently of the Head that is over them. In all their duties and functions they act only for Christ, and therefore must keep within the strict limits of His commission. The rights and privileges of Christ's Church are protected from the caprice and arbitrary encroachment of the office-bearers, by the restraint of Christ's express authority over them; and underneath His crown, and sheltered by it, is found the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. The functions of the office-bearers of the Church are minsterial, not lordly.[1]

IV. In what light are the decisions of the Church or its Courts to be regarded, in consistency with the great principle that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule of Church power?

We have seen that the laws of the Church, in so far as they can be regarded as valid, are declaratory and not enactive. We have seen that the function of the office-bearers of the Church is ministerial, and not lordly. And now, when the office-bearers, in the lawful administration of their office, proceed to apply the laws of Christ to any particular case, as the circumstances or emergency may demand, and when, acting not for themselves, but for Christ, they pronounce a judicial decision,—in what light is that judgment to be regarded, and to what extent, and in what manner, is it binding upon the conscience? Here, too, the answer is not far to seek or difficult to find, determined as it must be by a reference to the great and fundamental principle that the mind of Christ, revealed and expressed in the Bible, is both the rule and the limit of Church power. If the judgment or decision pronounced in the lawful exercise of their authority by the Church or its office-bearers be in accordance with the principles of the Word of God, that decision was before pronounced in heaven; and it is both valid and binding upon the conscience, not only because it is consistent with God's Word, but also because it is a decision lawfully pronounced by a lawful tribunal appointed by Christ for the purpose. "Verily I say

[1] [Apollonius, *Jus Majest. circa sacra*, pars i. cap. vi. pp. 111–140.]

unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."[1] But, on the contrary, if the judgment pronounced by the Church or its office-bearers, although in the lawful exercise of their office, be itself unlawful, if it be inconsistent with the mind of Christ as expressed in His Word, then the decision is itself invalid, and the authority by which it was pronounced does not make it binding on the conscience. No judgment of any Church whatsoever can bind the conscience, except in so far as, and no further than, it is grounded upon the Word of God. And in the case of the last resort, when remonstrance and argument and persuasion have failed to induce the Church to reconsider or reverse its own decision, as incompetently or invalidly given, there is yet one remedy, and an ultimate one, reserved to the member against whom the decision is pronounced: he may transfer the case for judgment to a higher tribunal, and for relief and freedom to his own conscience may take appeal from the act of the Church of Christ on earth to the judgment of Christ Himself in heaven. Under the solemn protection of an appeal so taken, his conscience shall be free, and the sin shall not be on him, but on his judges. The acts of the Church are binding and valid only in so far as they are ratified by Christ, and in accordance with His Word.[2]

[1] Matt. xviii. 15-18.

[2] [Hauber's summary of the views of our Church on this subject is, upon the whole, fair enough: "Christus das einzige Haupt jeder Kirche, jedes Gliedes und Funktionärs, keine Autorität, weder bürgerliche noch kirchliche, darf sich dazwischenstellen: Christus das Prinzip des Daseyns für jede Kirche, daher eine Läugnung seiner Souveränität wenn man behauptet jene sei Sache individuellen Arrangements, oder könne durch Beschlüsse der bürgerlichen Autorität in's Leben gerufen und eingerichtet werden, daher eine Anmassung des Rechts Christi wenn eine Regierung innere Kirchenangelegenheiten regelt, und nicht anzunehmen auch wenn ihre Bestimmungen mit dem Gesetze Christi übereinstimmen; denn zwischen Kirche und Staat soll es seyn wie zwischen zwei unabhängigen Nationem. Diese Grundsätze . . . lassen die freie schottische Kirche, durch völlige Lossagung von der Staatsgewalt, durch wo möglich noch grossere Scheue vor dem Regierungsplacet . . . durch das Bewusstsein einer gleichsam gedoppelten Nationalität, als nächst verwandt mit der *katholischen* erscheinen, der sie jedoch andererseits völlig entgegentritt in der antihierarchischen Stellung ihrer Funktionäre, mit der Verweisung der Einzelnen an die unmittelbar zugängliche oberste Rekursinstanz Christus, namentlich aber auch dadurch dass sie das Kirchengut als ein zeitliches Besitzthum der Obrigkeit unterworfen seyn lasst, der gegenüber die Kirche hierin auch der Ungerechtigkeit sich zu fügen habe. Also bei der einen Kirche aggressive Unabhangigkeit vom Staat, bei der anderen rein defensive, ein völliger Ruckzug aus dem Politischem und Zeitlichem, während der Katholicismus seine Gewalt bis in die sichtbaren und zeitlichen Dinge hinein als eine gottlich-berechtigte be-

hauptet. Ebensowenig verwandt ist die schottische Kirchenfreiheit den freigemeindlichen Tendenzen; jene allein auf Christus, sein Gesetz in der Bibel, auf den geschichtlichen Offenbarungsgrund gestellt, diese dem Geiste sich anvertrauend, 'der auf sich selber stehe:' hier die religiöse Gesellschaft das Produkt freiwilliger Association, beliebigen Arrangements der Individuen, dort so streng wie die Lehre selbst von Christus abgeleitet: bei den Einen Zusammenhalten in ernster Glaubens- und Sittenzucht, bei den Anderen zerflatternde Willkür.

"Was männliche Consequenz ist und leistet," Hauber concludes, "kann man an dieser freien schottischen Kirche lernen, einem hochragenden Gebaüde auf beengtem Raum wie mit Zauberhänden, oder vielmehr von derselben Logik welche Calvin's Institutionen baute, aufgerichtet."—*Herzog's Real-Encyklopädie*, Art. Kirchenverfassung.]

CHAPTER III.

THE NATURE OF CHURCH POWER.

THERE are two kinds of power or authority of a public kind, and no more than two, known in this world; and there are two great organs by which they are respectively expressed or represented. There is that kind of authority, on the one hand, the proper and immediate province of which is the persons and properties, the temporal rights and privileges of men; and the great organ for expressing or representing this authority is the state, an ordinance appointed by God for dealing with such matters. There is another kind of authority that deals not with the outer, but with the inward man, and the proper sphere of which is the understanding and the conscience; and the great organ for expressing and representing this second authority is the Church of Christ, an express ordinance of God set apart and appropriated to such matters. In both cases it is an authority derived and subordinate, and wielded at second hand. The state is no more than the organ or instrument for expressing or exercising the righteous and inalienable authority of God, as supreme over the persons and possessions of all His creatures,—His delegate on earth for ruling over the secular affairs and outward condition of men, mainly for their temporal good. The Church, again, is no more than the organ or instrument for expressing or exercising the righteous authority of Christ as Lord of the conscience,—His steward on earth for administering His rights of dominion over the moral and intellectual nature of men, more especially for their spiritual good. In both cases the authority is of God. The obligation or duty owed, in either instance, is owed to Him. God has a supreme and inalienable right to rule over the outward estate of man, to dispose of his property, of his life, of his person, of his temporal possessions and privileges as He pleases. And He delegates a part of this rightful authority of His to the state,

to be used and administered according to certain fixed principles for the good of the community; and makes the civil magistrate His organ, as vested with some portion of His right to deal with the outward order and temporal estate of men. On no other principle than as being the steward of God's right to rule over the persons and properties of His creatures, can you explain the mysterious and awful power proper to every civil government, and necessary for its ends, which warrants it to deal absolutely and without appeal with the temporal rights, and possessions, and life of man.[1] Parallel to this, Christ has a supreme and absolute right to rule over the moral and intellectual nature of man, to bind the conscience, to impose laws upon the understanding and the belief, to dictate what shall be received as truth and what rejected as falsehood. And He delegates a part of this authority to the Church, to be held and exercised under certain restrictions for the spiritual good of its members; and makes the Church His organ to express, and His minister to wield, something of this authority over the conscience and the heart. Upon no other principle, except as the representative of Him who is Lord of the conscience, and as ministerially administering His lordship, can you explain the singular and mysterious power claimed by the

[1] ["Quod dii nuncupantur quicunque magistratum gerunt, ne in eâ appellatione leve inesse momentum quis putet: eâ enim significatur mandatum a Deo habere, Divinâ auctoritate præditos esse, ac omnino Dei personam sustinere, cujus vices quodammodo agunt. . . . Eodem pertinet quod Sapientia Dei per os Salomonis affirmat, Suum esse opus quod reges regnant et consiliarii decernunt justa, quod principes principatum gerunt, et munifici omnes judices terræ. Perinde enim istud valet acsi dictum esset non humanâ perversitate fieri ut penes reges et præfectos alios sit in terris rerum omnium arbitrium, sed Divinâ providentia et sanctâ ordinatione, cui sic visum est res hominum moderari, quandoquidem illis adest ac etiam præest in ferendis legibus et judiciorum æquitate exercendâ. . . . Quare nulli jam dubium esse debet quin civilis potestas vocatio sit non modo coram Deo sancta et legitima, sed sacerrima etiam et in totâ mortalium vitâ longe omnium honestissima. . . . Quæ cogitatio magistratus ipsos assidue exercere debet, quando ingentem illis stimulum addere, quo ad officium excitentur, et singularem consolationem afferre potest, quâ muneris sui difficultates (quæ multæ certe et graves sunt) leniant. Quantum enim integritatis, prudentiæ, mansuetudinis, continentiæ, innocentiæ studium sibi ipsis imperare debent, qui Divinæ justitiæ ministros se constitutos esse norunt? Quâ fiduciâ iniquitatem in tribunal suum admittent, quod Dei viventis thronum esse audiunt? Quâ conscientiâ in impia decreta subscribent eâ manu, quam ad perscribenda Dei acta sciunt ordinatam? In summâ, si se Dei vicarios esse meminerint, omni curâ, sedulitate, industriâ invigilent oportet, quo hominibus quandam Divinæ providentiæ, custodiæ, bonitatis, benevolentiæ, justitiæ imaginem in se repræsentent." See the whole of this fine passage, Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xx. 4, 6, etc.]

Church to exercise authority, in a certain sense, over the understanding and moral nature of man. There are, in short, two visible and separate departments in God's one universal government over His human creatures, marked out and divided from each other by deep and indelible lines. There is His visible government over the outward and temporal estate of man, and there is His visible government over the inward and spiritual estate of man. God has sovereign and absolute authority over both; but He expresses and administers that authority through separate channels and by different instruments. The state is the Divine and public organ for representing and expressing His authority over the first. The Church is the Divine and public organ for representing and administering His authority over the second. Beyond these two ordinances or organs of Divine authority, we know of no other power of a public and general kind among men.

Restricting our attention more especially to the case of the Church, as a Divine ordinance or organ for representing and exercising a power not its own, but given to it by Christ,—what, I ask, is the nature or character of its authority? What is the kind of power which is administered and enforced within the Christian Church?

I. The power of the Church may be demonstrated to be spiritual, because the purposes for which it is instituted and administered can be attained through means of a spiritual power, and are inconsistent with every other.

The slightest attention given to the matters about which Church power is employed, and to the objects for which it is bestowed, will suffice to show this. Church power—to follow the old and well-established division of it—may be regarded as of three sorts, according to the three different and separate classes of things with which it is conversant.

1*st*. There is the "potestas δογματικη," or the authority which the Church possesses and administers in regard to dogmas, or articles of faith. There is a certain office and place which the Church is appointed to occupy in regard to Divine truth, as revealed in God's Word, both in reference to those within and those without her pale. The Church is a divinely appointed witness for God's truth to those that are without; she is both a witness and a teacher to those that are within. It is her office to

attest and publish that truth to the world; ministerially to declare —under reservation of an appeal to the Word of God—what men are to believe and practise; to preach the Gospel to every creature; and to frame and exhibit a summary or confession of the faith of Christ in opposition to error, whensoever circumstances may call upon her to do so. Her right is not to bring her own authority to bear upon the conscience or the understanding, so as to enforce this confession or belief of the truth, as if it were her own; but it is her right, by explaining and enforcing and preaching God's Word, and by a direct appeal to it, to bring God's authority to bear on the souls of men, so as to secure both their faith and obedience to Him. Now, none but a spiritual power is involved in this: any other but a spiritual power is inconsistent with the very object in view. To secure the belief and obedience of men to the Word of God, the Church may and ought to put forth her power to teach, to instruct, to persuade, to preach the Gospel, and enforce it by the authority of God, who has revealed it. Anything beyond this exercise of spiritual authority defeats the very end intended, and, so far from securing, prevents the belief of the truth by men that they may be saved. A compulsory power can never secure my belief: it may force my submission, or hypocritical pretence of submission, to certain truths, but not the conviction of the understanding or the assent of the heart. It is not sufficient to say that a power not spiritual, but compulsory, *ought* not to be employed to secure my belief in the truth of God. The true state of the case is, that a power compulsory, and not spiritual, *cannot* be so employed. The very nature of the object to be attained renders it not merely improper, but impossible. The "potestas δογματικη" is a spiritual authority on the part of the Church to be a witness and interpreter, ministerially, of the truth of God to the consciences and understandings of men; and it is essentially incompatible with any power addressed to aught but the conscience and the understanding.

2d. There is the "potestas διατακτικη," the power belonging to the Church in the way of administering ordinances and government in the Christian society. This power comprehends the right to carry into effect the institutions and laws which Christ has appointed within the Church: it does not involve the power to bind the conscience or obedience of its members to the observance of new or additional ordinances, enacted by itself. In re-

gard to ordinances, the authority of the Church in the dispensation of them is purely administrative; the Church communicating to them no authority and no virtue from itself, but dispensing them solely as the appointed channels through which the Spirit of God conveys a spiritual influence to those who use them in faith, and not as charms to which the Church has imparted grace of its own. In regard to laws, the authority of the Church is no more than declaratory, and can neither enforce the obedience nor punish the transgression of them by any other than the authority wherewith Christ has made them binding, or the censures wherewith Christ has given sanction to their hold on the conscience. The Church has no physical influence, *ex opere operato*, wherewith to make ordinances or Sacraments of virtue, apart from the spiritual grace communicated through them by Christ; nor has the Church any temporal or coercive power, wherewith to secure obedience to its laws, or to revenge the transgression of them, apart from Christ's spiritual authority. Let the Church pretend to exercise a physical and not a spiritual influence in the dispensation of ordinances, and Sacraments become a trick of magic, a fantastic charm, not a spiritual service or a channel of grace. Let the Church pretend to use a compulsory, not a spiritual authority, in enforcing laws; and obedience becomes a dead and mechanical and worthless form, not a living and spiritual obedience. It is not merely that power physical and outward, and not spiritual and inward, *ought not* to be employed to dispense the Sacraments, or carry into effect the laws of the Church. More than that. A power physical and not spiritual *cannot* be used in the administration of grace or authority through ordinances or through laws, without changing and destroying their very nature as spiritual things in the Church of Christ.

3d. The third branch of Church power is the "potestas διακριτικη," or that which concerns discipline, and the admission to or exclusion from the fellowship of the Church. It comprehends all the authority necessary in the way of dealing with the understanding and conscience of men for the purpose of confirming them in faith and obedience, or convincing them of their offences, and recovering them by the exercise of admonition, warning, censure, and rebuke; or, if these methods shall fail of accomplishing their object, finally, as a last step, by the imposition of the spiritual sentence of exclusion from the ordinances and

communion of the Church. The discipline, for the due administration of which this power is conferred on the Church, is entirely of a spiritual kind, having for its one object and aim "the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."[1] A mere compulsory authority affecting the persons of men, or one not purely spiritual, and not limited to instruction, admonition, reproof, and censure, cannot, from the very nature of the case, secure the object in view. A discipline not spiritual, not addressed to the understanding and conscience, cannot be discipline in the proper sense of the term at all. To attain the ends of the "potestas διακριτικη" in the Christian Church, compulsion is not merely improper, but impossible.

In whatever light, then, the power of the Church is regarded, and whatever matters it may be conversant with, the object to be attained demonstrates that the power is spiritual, and spiritual only. A spiritual result must, from the very nature of things, be accomplished by a spiritual instrumentality.[2]

II. That the administration of Church power implies a spiritual and not a civil or temporal authority, may be demonstrated from the unambiguous statements of Scripture, and more especially from the express declarations of our Lord Himself. It is not difficult to recognise the different positions or steps by which such a demonstration can be made out, as they were laid down at different times, and separately exhibited in the statements of the Saviour.

First of all, we have the broad principle laid down of the deep and essential distinction, never to be obliterated or overlooked, between spiritual authority on the one side, and temporal authority on the other; and of the separation not in degree only, but in kind and obligation, between the things that are ranked under the one, and the things that are ranked under the other. "Then sent the Pharisees out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true,

[1] 1 Cor. v. 5. [Quum se tradidisse scribit (apostolus) Corinthium Satanæ, "ut spiritus salvus fieret in die Domini," hoc est, ut ego quidem interpretor, concessisse in damnationem temporaneam, ut æternum salvus fieret. Ideo autem Satanæ tradere dicit, quia extra Ecclesiam Diabolus est, quemadmodum in Ecclesia Christus. Nam quod quidam ad certam carnis vexationem referunt, mihi videtur incertissimum; cf. Aug. de Verb. Apost. in loc.—CALVIN, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xii. 5.]

[2] Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* Pars i. lib. i. tract. ii. cap. i. 3, 4.

and teachest the way of God in truth; neither carest thou for any man. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then said He unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."[1] In that brief but pregnant saying, our Lord recognised the broad and ineffaceable distinction between spiritual and temporal authority, and sanctioned neither of the opposite extremes of opinion, the representatives of which stood before Him, tempting Him to deny the separate authority of the civil magistrate on the one side, or the separate authority of God upon the other. Our Lord would not countenance the doctrine of the Pharisees, which tended to deny the lawfulness of the power of the Roman governor over their countrymen; nor would He countenance the doctrine of the Herodians, which tended to subject the authority of God in religious matters to Herod. Our Lord recognised the separate authority of each, and the separate province of each, drawing broadly and deeply the line of demarcation between the two. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Second, we find in our Lord's sayings another and an additional step in the argument which goes to separate the power of His Church from any approach to what is civil or compulsory. "There came unto Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom." After gently rebuking the folly and pretension of the two brethren in their expectation of temporal authority and aggrandizement, our Lord goes on in these emphatic words: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to

[1] Matt. xxii. 16–21.

minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."[1] We have here something additional to our Lord merely drawing the line, however deeply and broadly, between the things of God and the things of Cæsar. We hear Him expressly disclaiming for Himself, and the members or officers of His Church, the civil authority that kings claimed, and repudiating the idea that the power He came to wield or bestow on His disciples was a temporal lordship like theirs. "It shall not be so among you."

Third, we find in our Lord's sayings another and a further position laid down, in order, as it were, to complete and crown the argument; showing not only that there was a broad and indelible distinction between things spiritual and things temporal—not only that the power He claimed for Himself and His Church was not the civil authority of kings; but also, and finally, that the power of the Church was one distinctively different, because entirely of a spiritual kind. When placed in circumstances that called upon Him more explicitly to define what was the authority He claimed, and what the power that belonged to His kingdom, our Lord plainly asserted that it was of a spiritual kind, and that only. "My kingdom," said He to the Roman magistrate, "my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."[2] We have here all that was needed to complete the argument that the power peculiar to the Church of Christ is distinctively a spiritual power. There are three positions bearing on the question in the statement of our Lord to the Roman magistrate. *First*, His kingdom was not of this world, to be upheld or protected by the sword; *second*, and more than that, it was from heaven, and not of human authority: "My kingdom is not from hence;" and *thirdly*, and further still, it was a kingdom founded on the truth of God, and upheld only by the authority and force of truth: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." These three positions, laid down by our Lord in His

[1] Matt. xx. 20–28. [2] John xviii. 36, 37.

remarkable confession before Pilate, sufficiently indicate that His kingdom was to be one distinctively spiritual, reigning only by the power of truth over the understanding and conscience, and in this respect not identical, but contrasted with the dominion of the civil magistrate. In addition to the other declarations of our Lord, made at other times in the history of His life, they bring before us very plainly the fact, that the power He established in His Church is entirely a spiritual power, and is limited in the sphere of its operation to an authority over the understanding and conscience of men.[1]

Now this great and fundamental principle, that the nature of Church power is distinctively and exclusively spiritual, involves in it various inferences of a very important kind.

1. It manifests the unsoundness of the theory that would in any way identify the authority committed to the Church with the authority committed to the state. It is the leading error of the Erastian scheme, under all its various modifications, that in one way or other it virtually makes the power of the Church to be *one* with the power of the state, instead of their being two authorities fundamentally unlike and essentially separate. The older Erastians, including Erastus himself, made the power of discipline and government in the ecclesiastical body to be a trust committed to ecclesiastical office-bearers by the civil magistrate—a delegation to them of his temporal authority for the use of the Church. The more modern adherents of the scheme which identifies the civil with the ecclesiastical power, such as the late Dr. Arnold, restrict their theory to the case of a Christian state, and seem to make the power of the civil magistrate to be a spiritual power, accruing to him from his identification with the Church. In either shape of the theory, it is opposed directly to the very explicit separation made in Scripture between the nature of the two swords; and the no less explicit declaration following up this distinction, that the authority of the Church of Christ, in contradistinction to that of the state, is wholly spiritual. It is a very remarkable fact, indeed, that the harmony between the two powers or authorities of the Church on the one hand, and the state on the other, is to be established and maintained on the very opposite principle from that involved in the theories, whether of more ancient or more recent Erastians, and is to be upheld, not

[1] [Turrettin, tom. iii. loc. xviii. Qu. 29–32.]

because these two authorities can be identified or brought into one, but because they are so diametrically and fundamentally opposite in their nature that they never can be identified. A harmony between the spiritual and the temporal authorities is brought about just because they are totally opposite in character, and cannot be merged into each other; not because they are alike, and may be regarded as essentially one. Were the leading principle of the Erastian scheme true, that the ecclesiastical and civil powers are fundamentally one and the same, they could not exist together in the same community, without the sacrifice, on the one side or other, of their interest, power, and independence. Their claims would be inconsistent with each other's existence as independent bodies; and occupying the same field, and asserting the same kind of jurisdiction, and demanding, it might be, opposite obedience, they would inevitably run counter to one another. The irreconcilable distinction in nature between spiritual and temporal authority, is the very reason why they can exist together in perfect harmony. The things of God are not inconsistent with the things of Cæsar, just because they are fundamentally distinct. The authority committed to the Church is in perfect unison with that other authority committed to the state, seeing that the spiritual administration of the one is essentially different from, and cannot be identified with, the temporal dominion entrusted to the other.

2. The great truth which we have endeavoured to establish, of the essentially spiritual nature of the authority committed to the Church of Christ, exposes the fallacy of those claims to civil rights and powers which, in various shapes, have been made in virtue of such spiritual authority on the part of the Church.

The mischievous tendency of that error which confounds what is spiritual with what is temporal, has been established in the history of the Church of Christ in wholly opposite forms, leading to the most different yet equally pernicious results. We have a memorable example of the injurious consequences of such an error in the instructive history of the revolt of the Anabaptists in Germany, at the time of the Reformation, against all civil government, and their assertion of a claim, on the part of those whom they called "the saints," to the dominion of the earth in the name of their Master. It was a fundamental principle in their creed, that the Church of Christ consisted of a society of

saints, who, in virtue of their character as Christ's servants, and in consequence of His authority over all, were vested in a civil supremacy over the rest of mankind, and in a Divine right to the inheritance of the earth as theirs, with all its temporal privileges and possessions. The very same principle in substance was the tenet of the Fifth Monarchy men in this country, during the confusion caused by the numerous sectaries that prevailed during a part of the seventeenth century, affirming as they did, that the possession of grace by the Church or its members gave them also a title to the possession of civil rights and property. The history of fanaticism affords frequent and not uninstructive illustration of the mischievous consequences resulting from the confounding together of what is distinctively spiritual with what is temporal, and from attempting to engraft the one kind of authority upon the other.

But the most memorable example, without doubt, of all those given of the injurious effects of confounding and mingling together the spiritual and the temporal, is afforded us from a very opposite quarter. The enthusiasm of the fanatics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, presents to our view no such flagrant and monstrous violation of the fundamental doctrine, that the power of the Christian Church is distinctively spiritual, and exclusively so, as does the elaborate and systematic endeavour of the Romish Church to graft a temporal authority upon a spiritual one. As a direct demand, or as an indirect assumption arising out of the spiritual power of the Church, it has been the attempt of Popery in every age to bring in, along with the spiritual pretensions of the clergy, from the highest to the lowest of them, the claim of temporal privileges or authority. We see this in the exemptions claimed by the Popish clergy, in virtue of their spiritual character and office, wherever these claims were likely to be tolerated or to prove successful, from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals, both in respect to their persons and property. We see it again in the effects of a temporal and civil kind, ascribed to the sentence of excommunication pronounced by the Church, wherever circumstances and opportunity conspired to favour the ascription. We see it, above all, in the practical assumption by popes, and that grounded on the plea of their spiritual supremacy, of the right to exercise control in temporal matters, to dispose of kingdoms and crowns, to depose sove-

reigns from their thrones, and to absolve subjects from their oaths of allegiance. In regard to this latter point, the monstrous claim of the Pope to supremacy in temporal things, there is indeed a difference of opinion among the adherents of the Papacy. There is one party, with Gregory the Seventh at their head, who maintain the Pope's supremacy in temporal matters as directly involved in the spiritual office he holds, as the vicar of Christ on earth. There is a second party, with Bellarmine at their head, who deny to the Pope a direct, but ascribe to him an indirect, supremacy in temporal matters, in so far as it may be necessary for spiritual ends,—an ascription which practically amounts to the same thing as a direct authority. And there is a third party, made up mainly of the defenders of the Gallican Liberties, who deny to the Pope any proper jurisdiction, direct or indirect, in civil affairs. But this latter party have always formed but a small minority in the Church of Rome, compared with the adherents of the former two theories. The temporal supremacy of the Pope, direct or indirect, has been avowed by Popes declared to be infallible, and by the fourth Council of Lateran, accounted to be œcumenical and authoritative; and it never has been disowned as a doctrine by the Church.[1] And unless history is to be regarded as an old almanack, and the witness of history is to be disowned, it will be found written there, that Popery has never failed, when circumstances permitted the assumption, to claim the temporal along with the spiritual authority, and to grasp the double sword of civil and priestly power; and among the merchandise wherewith she has trafficked with the merchants of the earth, and made herself rich, in addition to the treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones, there have been found both "the bodies and the souls of men."[2]

[1] [*Vide supra*, pp. 104–106. Edgar, *Variations of Popery*, 2d ed. pp. 124–157, 181–208. Stillingfleet, *Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome*, Edinr. 1837, pp. 170–196.]

[2] Rev xviii. 2–13.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXTENT AND LIMITS OF CHURCH POWER.

THERE are two extremes of opinion manifested on opposite sides of the question in regard to the extent of the power of the Church. There is one class of men who exaggerate and overrate the extent of Church power; there is a second class who unduly limit and underrate the extent of it. We have not far to seek for the representatives of both parties in the present day. There are, on the one hand, those who overrate the extent of Church power, and stretch the limits of Church authority beyond the warrant of Scripture,—High Churchmen in all communions, who advocate claims on behalf of the Christian society not justified by the purposes of its institution, or consistent with the will of its Founder, —in whose eyes Church power is an undefined and mysterious thing, having no very well marked limits at all,—a magic charm, a supernatural virtue, when it administers ordinances, or dispenses sacramental grace, or exercises priestly offices to the members,—an absolute and irresponsible spiritual authority, not to be profanely scanned or impiously restricted, when it imposes obligations, and dictates laws to bind the conscience and obedience in spiritual things. Such opinions in regard to the nature and extent of Church power, if fairly and consistently acted on, must inevitably lead to a priestly usurpation and an uncontrolled despotism both over the conscience and the civil rights of men,— a despotism the most insupportable of any, because in its nature spiritual, and in its pretensions of Divine authority. There are those, on the other hand, who unduly limit and under-estimate the extent of Church power, and the exercise of Church authority, —Low Churchmen of all communions, who deny to that power its proper place and standing as a Divine ordinance,—in whose eyes it ceases to be a power of God at all, and its exercise is no longer stamped with a Divine warrant, or accompanied with a

Divine and special blessing; a nullity when it administers laws in the Christian society, carrying with it no binding obligation except from the consent of the members; and an empty and unblessed form, divorced from any Divine or gracious influence, when it dispenses sacraments and ordinances in the Church. Such views, consistently carried out, go to the opposite extreme, and evacuate Church power of all that belongs to it by the institution of God in the way either of authority or grace, reducing it to the level of a mere human appointment, binding no Divine obligation on the conscience, and communicating no Divine blessing to the soul. Both of these views are unfounded, and both are to be guarded against, more especially in the present day, when the one extreme is so apt to generate the other, and when both may thus co-exist and prevail side by side. There can hardly be a more important inquiry connected with this subject, than that which seeks to ascertain the extent and the limits of Church power. It is necessary to mark the *extent* of Church power, as contradistinguished from a mere voluntary and human arrangement, and as connected with both a Divine authority and a Divine blessing. It is no less necessary to mark the *limits* of Church power, as contradistinguished from a spiritual and uncontrolled tyranny, or a supernatural and mysterious charm, and as restricted by the nature of its office and the appointment of its Divine author. To these two points, taken in their order, we shall now advert.

I. In regard to the extent of Church power, and the place occupied by it in the arrangements of God with His people, there is one sentence of the Westminster Confession of Faith which will help not a little to explicate the question. The proposition to which I refer is applied by the Confession to certain departments of Church power only — those, namely, which have respect to doctrine, government, and discipline; but it is equally applicable to the remaining department, or that which relates to the administration of ordinances and Sacraments in the Christian society. "It belongeth to synods and councils," says the Confession of Faith, "ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God and government of His Church; to receive complaints in case of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same; which decrees

and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, *not only* for their agreement with the Word, *but also* for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word."[1] The latter part of this sentence very distinctly marks out the place and extent of Church power. The exercises of that power in ministerially deciding in matters of faith, or ministerially carrying into effect the law of Christ in matters of government or discipline, "are to be received with reverence and submission, *not only* for their agreement with the Word, *but also* for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word." In other words, there is a certain obligation which Church power carries with it, because its acts and decisions are agreeable to the Word of God; there is a second and additional obligation which Church power carries with it, because it is itself an ordinance of God, appointed expressly for such ends. When Church power is employed ministerially to declare the truth of God in a question of faith, or ministerially to judge in a question of government or discipline, the declaration of doctrine and the decision of law are to be received and submitted to on *two* grounds: *first*, and chiefly, because they are agreeable to the Word of God; but *second*, and in a subordinate sense, because they are emitted by the Church, as an ordinance of God instituted for that very purpose. And what is true, as intimated in the Confession, in regard to the exercise of Church power in matters of faith, or government, or discipline, is true also of Church power in any other of its exercises,—as, for example, in regard to the administration of the Sacraments in the Christian Church. There is a something that belongs to such administrations, because they are agreeable to the appointments of Christ in His Word; but there is also a something that belongs to the administration, because it is an act of the Church, as an ordinance of God instituted expressly for that end.

In short, admit that Church power in its various branches is itself an appointment or ordinance of God, and it is impossible to deny that, because it is a Divine ordinance, there must be a Divine authority and a Divine blessing connected with its use, apart from and over and above what is connected with it, because

[1] Conf. chap. xxxi. 3.

what it does is agreeable to the Word of God. In the ordinance itself there will be a Divine virtue or Divine authority, just because it is an express ordinance of God. It will show itself to be from God by the power or blessing it carries along with it; and that altogether apart from what the doings or decisions may derive from the fact that they are agreeable to His revealed will. The exercise of Church power, when in accordance with the Word of God, will have a blessing more and better than the exercise of a merely human power when in accordance with that Word; just because the one is of God, and the other of man. The use of Church authority, when agreeable to the Scriptures, will have in it a power more and better than human authority when agreeable to the Scripture; just because the one is Divine and the other is not. In fine, the power of the Church is one of authority and not only of advice, when employed in the administration of government; because it is Christ's ordinance for rule. The power of the Church is a power of blessing, and not a power without a blessing, when employed in the dispensation of ordinance and Sacrament; because it is Christ's appointed channel to bless. The power of the Church is one judicial, and not extrajudicial, when employed in the execution of discipline; because it is Christ's ordinance on earth to bind or to loose. To this extent the power of the Church unquestionably goes, being "an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word."

Now this fundamental position as to the extent of Church power is expressly denied, or practically set aside, more especially by two parties: the one of which affirm that Church power is of mere human ordinance and institution; the other of which limit and restrict its exercise upon the principle of the Independents.

1*st*. The position now laid down is denied by those who make the power of the Church, like the Church itself, to be a matter of private and human arrangement or institution.

With this class, Church power is the mere delegation by the members of the power common to all into the hands of a few; and the extent of it is determined and limited by what they thus consent to give or to withhold. According to this theory, there can be no such thing in the government of the Church as authority in the proper sense of the term at all, that is to say, a power binding upon the members apart from their own appointment of it, and consent to its existence. There can be no such thing in

the administration of Sacraments as a gracious power, in the proper sense of the words; for, over and above their meaning and influence as signs, there can be no Divine grace or blessing in them. There can be no such thing in the discipline of the Church as a judicial act sufficient to bind or loose; for discipline in its highest form, as excommunication, can be no more than is the exclusion of a member by any private or voluntary society. Under such a system there would be laws without authority, ordinances without grace, and discipline without judgment. It is not necessary to delay to deal with such a theory of the Church and of Church power as this. It is plainly founded on the doctrine, which has already been considered and found wanting, that the Church is no more than a private and voluntary society, and that its prerogatives and privileges are derived from the delegation and consent of its members. If the Church be of God, it has powers and prerogatives, not its own, but His. If the Church be His ordinance for administering doctrine, government, Sacrament, and discipline on earth, the power of the Church must be something more and higher than merely human power, or human permission.

2*d*. The fundamental position as to the extent of Church power already laid down is denied or set aside by those who hold the principle of Independents.

The denial by the Independents of the doctrine we have stated in regard to the power of the Church is more especially directed against that particular department of its exercise which has reference to government and discipline. The authority of the Church or its office-bearers in these matters is so limited and curtailed by Independents, as to amount, properly speaking, to a power of advice, rather than a power of authority. The views of the Independents on this point naturally result from the place which their theory of ecclesiastical polity gives to every member of the Church in its rule, and from the right which every man in connection with the society has, upon their principles, to take part with the actual office-bearers in the government of it. The authority which the office-bearers, upon such a system, can wield over the members must be very limited indeed, being from the very nature of the system an authority exercised by the rulers in conjunction with, and by the permission and consent of, the ruled. An authority so conditioned and checked by the necessity of the

consent of the parties over whom it is exercised, cannot, in the proper sense of the word, be authority at all. It is advice, or it is counsel, administered by one party to another; but it cannot be authoritative power, exercised by one party over another, when the concurrence of both is required before it can be exercised at all, and when either party may refuse that concurrence at their pleasure.

It is hard to gather from the statements of Independents on the point, what is the precise nature of the office they assign to the rulers, as distinct from the members of the Church; for that there are such office-bearers as rulers they cannot, in consistency with the express declarations of Scripture, deny; and, in point of fact, it is generally admitted by them. It is no less difficult to understand what is the extent or kind of power they allow such rulers to possess; for a distinct power, separate from that of other members, they must, in accordance with many explicit statements of the Scriptures, concede to them. In so far as it can be understood from their explanations, it is a power shared by the rulers and the ruled, to this extent, that it is not binding upon the ruled, except with their own permission and consent, and that without that permission and consent it is invalid and not binding. Such power seems to be a power on the part of the rulers to give advice to, not to exercise authority over, the members,—advice which may be lawfully rejected by the members if not concurred in by them, and not authority which cannot lawfully be rejected, whether ultimately concurred in or not. In the work of Mr. Innes on Independency, he says: "In an Independent Church nothing is decided by representation. Whatever is done by those appointed to rule, is considered in presence of the general body, *and with their consent*." "There could be no room for authority if conviction were deemed necessary, because it is only by instruction and persuasion that it is produced. Like the sensitive plant, it shrinks at the gentlest touch of power, and the rude intruder must be completely withdrawn before it again exerts its energy. On these principles, I consider the authority of Presbytery as standing on a most unscriptural basis." [1] To the same effect, in speaking of the kind and extent of power confided to pastors

[1] Innes, *Letters on Independency*, quoted by Brown in his *Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, in reply to Independents*, Edinr. 1805, p. 20.

or rulers, Dr. Wardlaw, in his work on Congregational Independency, says: "They (the pastors) have no wish for more power, —no wish for either the power to make laws, or the power to execute the laws that exist, *independently of the concurrence of the brethren*." [1] In like manner, Dr. Davidson, in his work on the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament — although he somewhat inconsistently disavows the notion that the power of the Church in matters of government is no more than a power of advice — gives the following explanation of the extent of authority vested in its rulers: "Having explained and authoritatively declared the will of Christ concerning matters brought before the brethren, the minister pronounces sentence *with their consent. He has no authority to enact regulations for the guidance or discomfort of the brethren without their approval.* On the contrary, he must proceed all along *with their knowledge and sanction.* It is expedient and *necessary* that they admit the propriety of all his measures." [2] Now it is plain, that whatever name may be given to the power belonging to the rulers apart from the ruled, all these eminent Independent writers now quoted agree in this, that it is a power valid with the concurrence, consent, and sanction of the ruled, but not valid without their consent, concurrence, and sanction. Whatever name such a power may be expressed by, it is not authority, in the proper sense of the term, which, when lawfully exercised by the rulers, cannot lawfully be rejected by the ruled, whether they concur or not.

In dealing with the principles held by Independents, when they deny or practically set aside the exercise of power and authority, properly so called, in the Church of Christ, there are certain concessions which justice requires us to make in their favour.

First, the power claimed by the governors of the Christian Church is not an arbitrary or capricious authority, to be wielded at will by them, in disregard of the rights or consciences of the

[1] Wardlaw, *Congregational Independency*, Glasgow 1848, p. 320. "The distinctive polity of Independents consists in the two particulars: 1*st*, that *each Church is entrusted with its own government;* and 2*d*, that *that government is to be conducted not by the office-bearers alone as its representatives, but by the office-bearers and the congregation conjointly*," p. 234. Comp. also pp. 316–320.

[2] Davidson, *Eccles. Polity of the New Testament*, London 1848, p. 276. Compare Dr. King's vigorous and able criticism of these statements, as well as of Dr. Wardlaw's position referred to above. *Exposition and Defence of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government*, Edinr. 1853, pp. 50–65, 84–89.

members. There are certain limitations of a most important nature affixed to that power, and certain principles of a definite kind laid down for the use and administration of it, which set bounds round about it, and bring it into harmony with the liberty of conscience, rightfully belonging to every private individual of the Christian society.

Second, there are means of a most indispensable kind to be employed in the way of explanation and instruction, counsel and persuasion, to secure the convictions and concurrence of the private members of the Church, in whatever act or declaration the rulers, in the exercise of their judicial, or legislative, or administrative functions, may find it necessary for them to perform or to adopt. Without the use of such means to carry the conscience and understanding of the members of the Church along with them in all that they do and declare, the office-bearers are not at liberty to use or enforce their peculiar power at all. And it is only when all such means have been employed and exhausted without effect, and when the members of the Church, so dealt with in the way of Christian persuasion and instruction, still refuse their concurrence, that it may be necessary and is lawful to use authority to strengthen the appeal, and to fall back upon the ultimate resource of all societies,—namely, the inherent right of the rulers to rule, and the no less inherent duty of the ruled to obey.

Third, it may be yet further conceded, that the members and office-bearers of the Church are mutually entitled to give as well as to receive advice and counsel; and that those in office are bound to give all due weight to the opinions of the membership, so as, if possible, to bring about a mutual understanding and agreement.

Fourth, there is yet another concession which it is necessary to make in regard to this matter, and which it is of some importance to note; and it is this, that the mere resistance to authority as authority alone, ought not to be made a ground for Church censure or punishment, when there is no moral or spiritual offence connected with the resistance. Of course resistance to authority, even when that authority is put forth, as it sometimes may and must be, in enforcing a thing indifferent, may yet be associated with moral guilt on the part of those who indulge in it. Such resistance may arise out of feelings of hatred to all restraint, or opposition of a malignant kind to all authority; it may become contumacy, and as such involve moral blame. But until resist-

ance to authority becomes in one way or other morally wrong, when the consent of the members to the act or deed of the rulers is withheld from no cause in itself sinful, such want of consent or concurrence ought to be dealt with on the principle of forbearance in things indifferent, and not be visited with censure or penalty of an ecclesiastical kind.

But after making these concessions to the advocate of Independent views, it is still true that these views come very far short of the right and Scriptural doctrine on the subject of the extent of Church power.

In the first place, such views, if fairly carried out, are inconsistent with the nature of every orderly and well-regulated society.

A joint authority shared by the rulers and the ruled, or an authority vested in the rulers, but only to take effect when the ruled add their consent and concurrence, and not otherwise, is, from the very nature of the case, a power which it is impossible consistently or practically to carry out. A right of government dependent for its validity and binding obligation upon the giving or withholding sanction to it by those who are governed—which there is no duty in yielding submission to, and no blame in refusing to obey—considered simply as authority, can, it is plain, be no government at all, in the proper meaning of the word, and was never yet practically realized in any community under heaven. In the purest democracy, whether civil or ecclesiastical, where the consent and concurrence of the largest number of the members of the society is needed to the act of government, the consent and concurrence of *all* was never yet obtained. Both in civil and ecclesiastical matters, in such cases, a majority must have the right to rule, and a minority must be under obligation to obey. And such, in point of fact, must be the case in the instance of Independent Churches, where all the members have a joint right to rule, by giving or withholding their concurrence to the act of authority done. There is no exemption in such instances from the necessity laid upon every society, however purely democratic, to be ruled, when a difference of opnion shall arise, by the decision of the majority. Whenever differences cannot be accommodated by explanation or concession on either side, and when both parties still retain their opinions, it may be conscientiously and from conviction, there is and can be no resource except for the will and decision of the majority to become the law both of the

majority and minority. In such a case, even in an Independent congregation, the judgment of the majority is invested with all the right to rule, and to command obedience from the others, which the judgment of the office-bearers alone, according to the principles of Presbyterianism, would possess. The unanimity to which some Independent writers refer as prevailing in their congregational meetings is only a nominal one, the dissenting minority, if they do not leave the Church, being compelled to give in by what is really a species of coercion. In point of fact, government on the principle of a right to give or withhold consent and concurrence to the act of the governors by all, and so to make them binding or the reverse, is practically an impossibility. It is inconsistent with the very idea of authority, and with the nature of an orderly and well-regulated society.[1]

In the second place, such views are incompatible with the many and explicit statements of Scripture in regard to the nature and extent of Church power.

These statements may be conveniently classified under four heads. 1. The names or designations given to the parties ruling in the Church, in the strongest manner demonstrate that their office and power were in the strict sense of the term authoritative, and are incompatible with the limitation implied in the Independent theory. They are entitled bishops, ἐπισκοποι, in many passages of Scripture,—a word which in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament is repeatedly employed to denote the civil or military power of the Jewish officers over those committed to them, and which is not consistent with the idea of authority de-

[1] Four points may be noted with respect to the power of Church rulers on the Presbyterian system, as distinguished from the Independent, the Popish, or the Prelatic. 1. Their power is not lordly, but ministerial. 2. It is not compulsory, but spiritual. 3. It is not capricious, but regulated by law. 4. It is not oppressive, but bounded by the liberties of the Christian people. It is the *same* power as that of the majority over the minority in Independent Churches; but it is checked and modified by two things,—the popular election of the rulers, and the principle of representation. The latter, or the representative principle in Presbyterianism, averts the necessity of those sharp personal collisions which occur in Independent Church meetings, as in all pure democracies. Any case of difficulty or delicacy that arises in a Presbyterian congregation can at once be extricated from its personal and local entanglements, and handed over to be dealt with calmly and deliberately in the higher representative Church Courts.

The two root principles of Independency, as stated by Wardlaw, are: *first*, each congregation stands alone in the management of all its affairs; *second*, a conjoint system of government by the concurrent judgment of the whole

pendent on the consent or concurrence of the ruled. Again they are frequently spoken of under the title of presbyters, πρεσβυτεροι, —a term likewise in common use among the Jews, as is shown by the Septuagint, to signify the civil magistrates or elders who judged and sat in the gate of a city; and which, when applied to ecclesiastical magistrates, is incompatible with the limitations put upon their office by the Independents. They are further called rulers, ἡγουμενοι,—a word generally employed both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to express the power and authority of civil rulers, and which, used ecclesiastically, can admit of no such restriction as that of a dependence on the concurrence of the ruled. Finally they are spoken of as pastors, ποιμενες, which both by sacred and profane writers is made use of for the office of kingly power, as in the well-known Homeric phrase, "the shepherd of the people." The common use and application of such terms in reference to the governors of the Christian Church, necessarily implies authority in its proper sense and extent, and not in the limited meaning assigned to it by the Independents. 2. The precepts or instructions given to the rulers of the Church, in regard to the discharge of the duties of their office, are at variance with the Independent view of Church power. They are instructed not merely to "teach," to "exhort," to "beseech"—which might all be compatible with a power of advice, such as Independents restrict them to—but also in discharge of the proper functions of their office to "reprove" and "rebuke"—ἐλεγχειν, ἐπιτιμαειν.[1] 3. The terms of the exhortations and commands, addressed to the members of the Church in regard to the

Church or congregation. The practical result is, that the theory is utterly unworkable, and that the government is just a specimen of what is known in mechanics as "unstable equilibrium," oscillating to and fro between a tyranny of the one and of the many. Let the "centre of gravity," the preponderating weight of character and energy, lie with the minister, and the Independent system becomes a monarchy, more or less constitutional. Let the weight of influence lie with the deacons or managers, or with the people, and the Independent system becomes an oligarchy more or less close, or a democracy more or less turbulent. In short, if all have an equal right to govern, practically it is a mere chance how the balance shall adjust itself, and in whose hands the power shall ultimately be lodged. If indeed Dr. Davidson be correct in stating that an Independent pastor has a right to preside at all Church meetings, and to silence any speaker of whom he disapproves (*Eccles. Pol.* p. 274), this ministerial veto, vigorously used, might perhaps place the bulk of the power in the hands of the pastor. See Dr. King's remarks on this point, referred to above.

[1] 1 Tim. v. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Tit. i. 9, 13, ii. 15.

measure of obedience to be rendered by them to the authority over them, forbids the interpretation put upon that authority by the Independents, as in every respect waiting upon the consent of the governed for its validity. The precepts laid upon them are such as these: "*Obey* them that have the rule over you;" πειθεσθε, a word which, although it may denote the obedience yielded to persuasion, also signifies the obedience owing to authority. "*Submit yourselves*, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account;"[1] ὑπεικετε, a military word, implying subjection of the most absolute kind. "I beseech you, that ye *submit yourselves* to such; and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth;"[2] ὑποτασσησθε, a term commonly employed to express the most entire and simple obedience. It is the same word which is used, for example, by the evangelist in speaking of our Lord's subjection to His human parents at Nazareth, and by the apostle in describing the obedience due to the civil magistrate.[3] 4. We have instances and descriptions of the power —ἐξουσια—so to be administered by the rulers and so to be obeyed by the members of the Church, such as to leave no doubt that it was judicial and authoritative. "I verily, as absent in the body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."[4]

Such names given to the rulers of the Church,—such exhortations in regard to their office addressed to them, — such precepts given to the members touching the obedience due to the office,—and such examples of the actual authority exercised as we find in Scripture, furnish a strong proof that Church power is a real power in the governors of the Christian society, and not a nominal one, dependent on the consent or concurrence of the governed. Both the nature of a regular society in general, and the statements of Scripture in regard to the Christian Church in particular, go to repudiate the Independent views as to the measure and extent of Church power or authority.

[1] Heb. xiii. 17.
[2] 1 Cor. xvi. 16.
[3] Luke ii. 51; Rom. xiii. 1, 5.
[4] 1 Cor. v. 3–5, 13.

II. So much, then, for the extent of Church power. The second subject to which our consideration was to be directed was the limits of it. After the repeated opportunities we have already had of indicating the restrictions that are put from various quarters on the use and administration of Church power, the very briefest reference will be sufficient to point out the limits of it. There are *four* different ways in which distinct and well-marked limits are set to the power of the Church.

1*st*. Church power is limited by the nature of it as distinctively and exclusively a spiritual power.

This first limitation excludes the possibility of the power of the Church being made use of in the way of Romish usurpation arrogating a right to a temporal or civil supremacy—following up ecclesiastical sentences with civil or semi-civil pains and penalties, such as bodily penances, pecuniary fines, or legal disabilities —and trampling under foot the political liberties and social rights of men. It still further excludes the Popish and semi-Popish doctrine of anything beyond a spiritual influence in ministers and ordinances, and a spiritual grace in the right use and observance of them; thus shutting out the *opus operatum* of the Church of Rome, the physical virtue which it attributes to ordinances, and no less shutting out the theory of a priestly charm in the "successors of the apostles," and sacramental grace in the ordinances dispensed by them, as held by High Churchmen of whatever communion.

2*d*. Church power is limited by the source of it, or by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, from whom it is derived.

This second limitation very clearly points to the character of the power vested in the office-bearers of the Church as entirely subordinate and ministerial, and bounded, as respects its authority and obligation, by the institution and rule of Him who has appointed it. It excludes the possibility of that power becoming an independent despotism or lordship in the hands of the rulers, and of their regarding it as if it were given for their own aggrandizement and exaltation, or to be used for the subjugation, by a spiritual tyranny, of the consciences and understandings of the other members of the Church. Because limited by the authority of Christ, that power can never become independent itself, or make the administrators of it independent. They are, in the strictest sense of the terms, the ministers or servants of Christ.

3d. Church power is limited by the rule prescribed for its exercise, or by the Word of God.

This third limitation ties down the administration of Church power to certain fixed principles and a certain definite law, and excludes the possibility of its becoming a wayward and arbitrary authority, to be wielded at the will or caprice of man. It forbids the unauthorized addition or subtraction of anything in the constitution, doctrine, worship, or discipline of the Church, such as Christ has not sanctioned in His Word.

4th. Church power is limited by the subjects of it, or by the rights, privileges, and liberty of the Christian people.

This fourth limitation more especially prevents Church power from becoming the instrument of spiritual oppression and tyranny as directed against the members of the Church, and shields from violence and wrong the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. Beneath the shelter of such a limitation, the conscience has a sanctuary which is blessed and sanctified by Christian freedom within, and over the threshold of which authority, even the authority of the Church, cannot pass. Within that sanctuary none but the Lord of the conscience may enter; and because it is His dwelling-place and home, His presence protects the conscience from the intrusion of the Church. The right of Church power is limited by the rights of conscience.

Such, then, are the limits, and such the extent, of the power of the Church. There is a double error to be avoided in regard to it. It is an error to make Church power not a reality, but a name, such as that it shall carry with it no Divine authority, and convey no Divine blessing. It is no less an error to make it not a name, but such a reality as that it shall become a power inconsistent with its own essentially spiritual character, independent of Christ, at variance with His Word, and incompatible with the liberties of His people. We shall then only apprehend it aright, when we are taught to recognise *both* the extent and the limits of Church power and authority.[1]

[1] Brown, *Vindication of Presbyterian Form of Church Government, in reply to Independents*, Edin. 1805, pp. 11–44. Wood's *Little Stone*, etc. *in reply to Lockyer*, Part ii. sec. 1. *Reasons of Dissenting Brethren*, Lond. 1648, pp. 27–34, 39. *Answer of the Assembly of Divines to Reasons of Dissenting Brethren*, Lond. 1648, pp. 16, 56–69, 106–112. Cotton, *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, Lond. 1644, pp. 11–16, 20–23.

CHAPTER V.

THE END AND DESIGN OF CHURCH POWER.

WE have now brought to a close our discussion of the extent and limits of Church power: *its extent*, as maintained against the views of those who deny its reality, either ascribing to it a human origin, or unduly restricting it, like the Independents; *its limits*, as maintained against the system of the Popish and semi-Popish worshippers of Church authority. There is a reality in Church power, and there is a certain extent assigned to it in its administration and exercise of authority: it is not a mere name or a nullity. But, on the other hand, while its authority and its exercise are real, and not merely nominal, there are definite limits prescribed to it, beyond which it cannot pass: it is checked and restrained by fixed and definite principles. Church power is a real and effective element in the ecclesiastical system; but it is an element like some of those forces, both in the moral and material world, which are balanced and modified in their working by other and counteracting forces. The harmony of the system is maintained, not by ignoring the existence of Church authority, or denying its extent, but by the operation of those opposite and counterbalancing principles in the ecclesiastical body, which modify its direction and limit its force.

But, after having assigned to Church power both its proper extent and its proper limits, the question that next meets us is, What are the ends and purposes for which it has been appointed? Christ, as Divine Head of the Church, has conferred on it certain prerogatives and a certain authority, and given it commission to exercise them in His name; and when challenged as to its right or title in the use of them, has permitted the Church to appeal to that commission as its warrant. With such a warrant in its hand, and with such Divine power to exercise, the Church has a mission on the earth of a most important kind; and by a

higher authority than that of the mere sufferance or permission of men, its power is to be used and administered among them. That power is a reality; it is given and it is exercised by warrant of God; it is a living force of ceaseless activity and vast energy, continually operating in the world; it is an element of Divine might ever at work in the midst of the earthly and lower forces by which human society is moved. And it is of no small importance that we understand the ends for which this power has been given, and to which it ought to be directed,—the design of its Divine Author in vesting the Church with an authority and prerogatives so unlike any to be found elsewhere on earth,—and the result intended to be wrought out by a mysterious and spiritual power so little akin to those of the world, and the operations and effects of which are so little to be calculated upon by mere worldly sagacity. The Church of Christ, and the power Christ has conferred on it, are elements introduced into the system of human affairs strangely alien to all others of an earthly kind, both in their origin and their character; and it is of moment to all parties distinctly to understand the aim and intention of such a force. What, then, is the purpose for which Church power has been instituted by God, and for which it ought to be employed among men? What are the end and design of it as regards the world, and as regards the Church itself?

I. As regards the world at large, the aim of Church power, and the end to be accomplished by it, are not direct, but indirect.

The power conferred on the Church by its Divine Head was bestowed, in the first instance, for the use and benefit of the Church itself, and can have only an indirect bearing on the world at large. It is limited in its object—at least primarily—to certain ends to be accomplished in regard to the Christian society; and does not, except as a secondary object, contemplate results to be attained beyond the limits of the society. This seems to be fairly implied in the general principle laid down by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Church at Corinth, when instructing that Church to exercise its power of discipline in excluding from its membership the incestuous person found within its pale. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are

without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth."[1] There is a general principle here laid down by the apostle in regard to Church power, drawing a line of marked distinction between those within the Church and the world without. In regard to those within the Church, the power of the Church was intended to take effect; so that with an offender who is called a brother, the Corinthians were not to keep company, nor so much as to eat. In regard to those without the Church, or the world at large, Church power was not intended to take effect; so that in regard to an offender, not a brother, but belonging to the world at large, no such restrictions were to be imposed or observed, and the Corinthians were not called to separate themselves in the same manner from him. In short, *because* a brother, and within the Church, it was necessary to deal with an offender by the authority of the Church; while it was not necessary so to deal with one equally an offender, but belonging to the world at large. And what is true, as intimated by the apostle, in the case of the exercise of Church power in the way of discipline, is true also generally of the exercise of Church power in any of its departments. The power of the Church of Christ is intended primarily for those that are within, not for those that are without: it bears only indirectly upon the world at large.

No doubt the Church has a most important mission in regard even to the world without. It is God's witness on earth, sent to testify with ceaseless voice for Him, and to be a visible and perpetual testimony for His cause, whether men will receive the testimony or reject it. The Christian Church, as regards the world without, is God's standing protest against its sin and in favour of Himself. But the grand and primary office of the Church is one bearing on the people of God; and its office towards the world at large is secondary and subordinate to that. Church power, in the first instance, and as its direct object, contemplates the end of the Church's benefit and edification; and only in a secondary sense has it any bearing on the world. In government and discipline, in framing and enforcing laws, in administering Sacraments, the power of the Church is confined to the Church, or to those that are within; and it is only in so far as is necessarily implied in discharging its office of a witness, or a protest, that Church power has any bearing upon the world, or

[1] 1 Cor. v. 11-13.

those that are without. As a witness, the Church declares the truth of God to the world; as a protest, it frames and exhibits a confession of its faith in opposition to the errors and unbelief of the world; but beyond that it does not go. "What have I to do to judge them that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?" In direct opposition to the Romish doctrine on the subject, it must be maintained that the power of the Church has no authority over, and no office to discharge towards, those beyond her communion, except the office of a witness for God. Popery, indeed, lays down a different scheme of Church power. The canons of the Council of Trent under the head of Baptism maintain the doctrine that all baptized persons, whether within the Church of Rome or without it, are properly subject to her power, in virtue of their being baptized, even although the baptism has not been administered by her hands.[1] Such a claim is plainly repugnant to the great Scripture principle that the office of the Church in relation to the world is that of a witness alone; and that it is only in so far as is necessary for the discharge of that duty that the power of the Church has any bearing upon those beyond her pale. As regards the world at large, the aim of Church power, and the end to be accomplished by it, are not direct, but indirect. It is for those within, not for those without, the Christian society.

II. The power of the Church has for its aim and end directly the general benefit and spiritual good of the Church as a body.

That this is the case is very explicitly announced by the Apostle Paul, when speaking of the authority vested in himself as an apostle and an extraordinary office-bearer in the Church: "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord has given me *to edification, and not to destruction.*"[2] And what is true of the extraordinary and temporary office of the apostleship which Paul held, and of the power belonging to it, is also true of the permanent and standing office-bearers of the Christian society, and of the ordinary power which they are commissioned to wield. Such power is instituted for the interests and spiritual edification of the whole Church, and not for the advantage of the

[1] Concilii Trident. Canones et Decreta. Sess. vii. De Baptismo; Can. iv. viii. Catech. Pars i. Art. ix. 12.

[2] 2 Cor. x. 8, xiii. 10.

few who administer it. It is not to create a separate class, or to aggrandize a privileged order in the Christian society, that Church power is given and limited to a few, any more than it is to create a caste, or to benefit a particular order in the civil society, that political power is given and restricted to a few. In the case of the state, the ordinance of power established by God is an ordinance for good not to a small body, but to all within it. The distinction of ranks, the privileges of civil rule, the authority of government, the rights of power, exist not because of the ambitious desires or interests of those invested with office, but because of the necessity of such things to secure the blessings of order, and justice, and peace in the community at large. And so, in the case of the Church, the power which belongs to it exists for the moral and spiritual good of the whole body, and not for the creation of a priestly caste, or for the aggrandizement of a few at the expense of the many. Government exists in the Christian society for the interest as much of the governed as the governors. Office exists for the benefit no less of those who have it not, than of those who have. Power belongs to the state ecclesiastical, not for the ambition or aggrandizement of a Church order, but for the edification and well-being of those who have no place in the Church but as members. Authority is exercised and enforced within the Christian Church, not for the gain of a few, but for the spiritual good of the many. The Church of Christ knows of no spiritual order distinct from the order of Christians, — no priestly caste separated from all others by internal rights and prerogatives peculiar to itself,—no separate interest for the members of which alone power and privilege and authority exist,—no lordly rank, to whom belong mysterious authority and transcendental privileges unknown to the rest.

The Church of Christ confesses to the existence within it of no *clergy*, as in the Church of Rome, distinguished by indelible "character" and internal powers from the *laity* or the Christian people. The true *clergy* of the Church of Christ are, according to the original import of the word, the κληρος, the "lot," or "possession," or "heritage" of Christ,—the whole body of His called and chosen people.[1] And in nothing is the spirit of Rome more apparent than in that distinction which she has set up

[1] 1 Pet. v. 3; Col. i. 12.

between the clergy and the laity, — between a sacerdotal and profane caste, — between those to whom, according to her Church principles, the power of the Christian society inherently belongs, and those who are appointed to be its slaves or its victims. The very last thing intended by its Divine Head in the institution of office, and authority, and power in His Church, was the creation or aggrandizement of a separate interest or privileged class, who should inherently possess a right to place, and power, and honour, at the expense of the rest. And although, for the sake of order, and for the sake of order alone, some were set apart in the Christian society to office and for the purpose of administering the authority of its government, yet it must never be forgotten that such an arrangement was made not for their sakes, but for the sake of the whole; and that in virtue of being so appointed to administer the power and manage the affairs of the body of Christians, they become all the more the "ministers" or servants of the rest. The spiritual edification of the whole body of believers is the one end and aim of Church power. It knows of no object apart from this. It confesses to no aim of a private and exclusive kind, distinct from the universal good. It is not the gain of a few at the expense of the many. It is not the peculiar prerogative or the peculiar interest of a privileged and separate order, who claim to be the heirs of apostolic power by "apostolic succession." "Not for that we have dominion," said an apostle *not* by succession, "not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus *the Lord*, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

The direct design and end of Church power is the spiritual edification of the Church,—meaning by the word not a privileged class, but the whole body of the faithful, whatever place or name they may have in the Christian society. For this one object Church power in all its forms and exercises was instituted, and ought to be administered within the Christian society. We can see, indeed, in regard to every department of Church power, whether it regards doctrine, ordinance, or discipline, that it is subservient to this great end, and that it is fitted as well as intended to advance the spiritual interests of the society.

Take the case of the exercise of Church power in regard to doctrine, or the office of the Church authoritatively to deal with

Divine truth, and it is not difficult to see how it is fitted and designed to promote the spiritual edification of the whole body. Under reservation of an appeal to the Word of God itself, it is the office of the Church ministerially, but yet authoritatively, to declare the truth there revealed; publicly to preach the doctrine of Christ and His Gospel, according to her understanding of them; and in addition to this, when circumstances call upon her to perform the duty, to frame and exhibit to the world, and in opposition to its unbelief and error, a summary or confession of the articles of faith held by believers. This is, speaking generally, the office of Church power in regard to doctrine. In regard to the world without, the Church is a witness for God, and against its unbelief; in regard to her own members within the Church, she is a teacher ministerially to declare the truth of Christ, and publicly to explain His Gospel. And it is not difficult, I think, to see that these uses or acts of Church power are for the spiritual edification of the whole body of the Church, and are directly and greatly calculated to promote its spiritual good. An individual man, with the Bible in his hand, and interpreting the Bible for himself, will, under the blessing of God, find in the private perusal of the inspired volume what will build up his own soul in spiritual wisdom and understanding. But the private perusal of the Word is not to be compared, as an instrument of influence and spiritual power, to the public preaching of the Word by the Church, as the ordinance of God appointed for that end. "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but *especially* the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation."[1] The Church, in the exercise of this power, lifting up a witness for the truth, and emitting an authoritative protest against error,—the appointed teacher, appealing not to its own authority, but to that of its Master, for its words, and demanding audience and belief in the name of Christ for Christ's own Gospel,—has been found in the experience of every age a spiritual power of mighty effect for the good and edification of the Christian society. Second to the Spirit, that witness of higher authority and more powerful efficacy still in declaring and testifying to the truth of God, the Church, in the exercise of its legitimate power as the public and visible teacher

[1] Shorter Catechism, Q. 89.

of doctrine, has been mighty through God both for the pulling down of the strongholds of spiritual error, and for the building up the body of believers in spiritual wisdom and edification.

Or take the case of the exercise of the Church's power in regard to ordinances and Sacraments; and it is not difficult to discern here, too, that it is designed and calculated to subserve in a very striking manner the edification of the Church. The power of ministering by Sacrament and ordinance to the spiritual advantage of the whole body of believers, is a most efficacious one. No doubt a man may be a Christian, alone and apart from the aids and advantages of social worship, and fellowship, and ordinances. It is a possible thing for a man to cherish and hide a solitary faith—a faith that is saving—within his own bosom, apart from those Divine helps and confirmations to faith which Church communion and Sacraments supply. But it is not less certain on that account, that a Christian doubles his Christianity by fellowship with other Christians; and that there is a blessing which cannot be enjoyed alone, nor unless shared at the same time with fellow-believers. In fellowship with the Church, and in the use of its ordinances, there is a spiritual influence experienced, which the Christian cannot enjoy by himself apart; and by the ministry of Sacrament and ordinance, the power of the Church is made subservient in a very marked and striking manner to the confirmation of the faith, the increase of the grace, the furtherance of the holiness, and the establishment of the obedience of believers. By its ministry of this spiritual provision, made by ordinance and Sacrament, for the help and advancement of its members, the Church becomes a living power to their souls of the strongest and most effectual kind; and day after day, as it administers Sacraments, and through them, as channels, communicates a grace and influence not its own, it works as an instrument of the most powerful description for the edification of the body of Christ.

Or once more, take the case of the exercise of Church power in regard to government and discipline; and it is not difficult to see that here, too, it tends directly and powerfully to advance the spiritual edification of the Church. The use and intent of the power of discipline intrusted to the Church are briefly and precisely expressed by the Apostle Paul, in speaking about the exclusion of the incestuous person from the fellowship of the Corinthian Church. He tells that Church "to deliver such an

one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." If discipline, as administered and enforced by the Church, in the use of the power committed to it, is intended "for the destruction of the flesh," and so must in one sense be painful, it is intended, by the help of that very severity, to accomplish the gracious and good purpose of "saving the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus." Its aim is a merciful one; and not the less so, that it is accomplished by means of a wholesome severity.[1] Its end is salvation; and not less certainly so, or rather all the more certainly so, that it is attained through the destruction of the flesh. Like all the other exercises of that power which Christ has committed to the hands of His Church, to be administered on behalf of His people, discipline is designed and calculated to promote its good. And when that power, severe but wholesome, is exercised in a right spirit, and by suitable means,—when the spiritual sword is wielded for protection and establishment of the Church against sin and spiritual offence, in the way not of tyranny but of tenderness,—it will carry healing and not death upon its edge. It is impossible to tell to what extent the spiritual power of discipline given to the Church may have contributed, as it unquestionably is intended, to repress transgression and to save transgressors—to bear back the inroad of offence and offenders—to guard the unstable and restore the fallen—to stir up Christians to diligence, and caution, and spiritual exertion—to confirm, and strengthen, and establish believers.[2] Whatever department or exercise of Church power may be considered, it will be found to be given and intended for the edification of the Church.

III. The power of the Church has for its aim and object *not* the destruction of the Church.

The emphatic and twice repeated expression of the Apostle Paul, when referring, on two separate occasions, to the use of his apostolical authority, has a twofold meaning. He tells the Corin-

[1] ["Vividæ disciplinæ severa misericordia."—Calvin.]

[2] ["Quemadmodum salvifica Christi doctrina anima est Ecclesiæ, ita illi disciplina pro nervis est: quâ fit ut membra corporis suo quodque loco inter se cohæreant. . . . Disciplina veluti frenum est, quo retineantur et domentur qui adversus Christi doctrinam ferociunt: vel tanquam stimulus, quo excitentur parum voluntarii: interdum etiam velut paterna ferula, quâ clementer et pro Spiritus Christi mansuetudine castigentur qui gravius lapsi sunt."—Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xii. 1.]

thians that it was given to him by Christ "for edification." But he tells them also, and in the same breath, that it was given to him by Christ, "*not* for destruction." And the addition of this second expression was not a needless tautology, but, on the contrary, a most emphatic indication of how Church power may be employed, and a no less emphatic protest against its abuse. When abused, indeed, or turned away from its legitimate purpose, it must necessarily tend, not to the edification, but to the destruction of the body of Christ. Such abuses of Church power, to the injury and not the advantage of the Church, may be met with in different communions. But they are most markedly and flagrantly seen in the Church of Rome, the history of which is little else but the history of Church power, turned to the purposes not of spiritual edification, but of deadly wrong, and destruction to the dearest and most sacred rights and interests of its members. I do not allude so much at present to that civil supremacy over the persons, and properties, and temporal rights of men, which the Church of Rome has sought to engraft upon her spiritual authority. In this way, doubtless, her Church power has been used "for destruction" indirectly, through the aid of the civil. But I refer more especially to the direct spiritual injury and wrong done to the souls of men, by the use, or rather abuse, of the spiritual power, which, more than any done to the temporal rights and privileges of men—to their persons and properties—has made that apostate Church to be the fitting illustration of the apostle's warning against a Church power, used not for edification, but for destruction. There are rights not less inherent in man, and far more sacred, than the right of property or life. There is the right of liberty of thought and of private judgment,—the right which every man has on his own responsibility, and not another's, to ascertain and know for himself what God is, what God has said, and what duty God requires of him, His accountable creature. There are his rights of conscience, and more especially the right of judging for himself what is his duty and what his sin in reference to God, and of determining for himself what he shall believe as God's truth, and what reject as man's doctrine and commandment. There are the rights of his soul, and more especially the right to that salvation which his soul requires, and which is freely given him of God. These are rights intimately and inherently belonging to man's intellectual and moral and

spiritual nature, which are dearer and better to him than property or life; and these rights the Church of Rome, in the exercise of its ecclesiastical power, has rudely trampled on, or violently taken away. And the history of that Church tells on its every page, and in characters never to be effaced, that the spiritual power committed to it "for edification" has been turned "to the destruction" of the body of Christ.

First, Popery has turned the power of the Church to the purposes of destruction, by violently taking away or rudely disregarding the rights of man, viewed as a rational and intellectual being. The right of every man to think and to judge for himself, and on his own responsibility, as a rational creature, Popery has taken away from its victims; and above all, the right to know God directly and immediately, by what God has made known of Himself, the Church of Rome has denied, and by its ecclesiastical power interdicted to its slaves. Itself blind, and the leader of the blind, who have trusted it, the Church of Rome has "taken away the key of knowledge," lest men should exercise their right to know God, and see for themselves His revealed will. It has sealed up the Bible as a perilous book, and forbidden men to receive it, except through the interpretation and teaching of the Church; thus standing between men and the knowledge of God in the way that God has given that knowledge in His own word. It is the first right of every human being, as a rational and intellectual creature, to understand God; because this was the very end for which he was made, and for which he lives. It was the distinctive purpose of his creation; and it is not only to degrade him from his place in creation, but to destroy his very character as a rational creature, to take from him by violence and wrong the right he has to know God in the way in which God has made Himself to be known. A power so employed as to rob man by force or fraud of this right, and to substitute the teaching of a fellow-creature for the Word of God addressed to his understanding, is a power exercised not for edification, but destruction.

Second, Popery has turned the power of the Church to the purposes of destruction, by forcibly taking away or insidiously destroying the rights of man, viewed as a moral and responsible being. The moral nature of man, as the seat of responsibility, can have no other master in the things of God than God Himself. He alone is Lord of the human conscience, and in its responsi-

bility to Him it claims to be free from the lordship and tyranny of a fellow-creature. The most solemn responsibility which conscience underlies is in judging for itself what is right and wrong, what is truth and error in reference to God, so that it may determine what it is to believe as His doctrine and commandment, and what disbelieve as the doctrine and commandment of men. It is the highest and most sacred action of conscience, and of man as a moral and responsible being, when he is thus brought immediately into contact with God, and into converse directly with God's Word, for the purpose of ascertaining for himself, upon the peril of his soul, what is truth that he may believe it, and what is duty that he may do it. And this right of conscience—this right of man as a moral and responsible creature—the Church of Rome has violently taken away, when in virtue of its spiritual power it pretends to dictate by an infallible authority what its victims are to believe, and demands at their hands in return an implicit faith in what it dictates. This is to destroy or to debauch the conscience, and to rob man by violence and injustice of the dearest right that is inherent in him as a moral and responsible being. To compel a man, by the exercise of an infallible authority, to believe what the Church believes, according to his conscience or against his conscience, is to destroy by force the moral nature of man in the highest form and exercise of it, as a judge within every man of truth and falsehood. The Church which claims such a right, and exercises such an authority, makes use of its spiritual power, not for edification, but for destruction.

Third, Popery has turned the power of the Church to the purposes of destruction, by violently taking away the rights of man as a spiritual being. The rights of his soul are to man the highest and dearest of all,—the right to embrace the Gospel which God has plainly revealed, and to share in the salvation which God has freely given. And most of all the Church of Rome has taken away this right from its victims, and violently robbed them of that which God has bestowed. Instead of the Gospel of God's love and power, it puts into men's hands "another gospel, which is yet not another" (ἕτερον εὐαγγελιον, ὁ οὐκ ἐστιν ἀλλο); and instead of the free and complete salvation to which every man that lives has received from God a right, Popery has substituted the lying cheats of its sacramental grace and priestly absolution, and has palmed upon its deceived and ruined victims the impos-

tures and tricks of indulgences and masses, of penances and the confessional. In its unhallowed claims to retain and remit sin, —to bind and loose the sinner,—to give or withhold grace,—to absolve or condemn at its will, the Church of Rome, in so far as it has been able to force its pretensions on its members, has to that extent succeeded in depriving them of their rights as sinners, given and guaranteed to them by God, to the enjoyment of His free grace and His great salvation: their *right* to embrace that Gospel, each man for his own soul, and to share in that salvation, each man for his own need; their *right*, without the intervention of church, or priest, or sacrament, to deal with a Saviour for His mercy upon His own terms, and in obedience to His own invitation. And shall not the blood of those souls slain by her violence and treachery be one day found in her skirts, and required at her hand, when God shall arise to vindicate against that apostate Church the rights of men taken away by force or by fraud,—those very rights which a Saviour died to purchase for them, and lives to bestow? Surely a Church power *so* exercised has been employed, not for edification, but for destruction.[1]

[1] [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. viii. x. xi. *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part I. chap. vii. viii.]

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIMARY SUBJECT OF CHURCH POWER.

BEFORE bringing to a close our discussions under the second great division of our subject,—that, namely, of the power of the Church, viewed generally,—there is one question of more than ordinary importance, and much more than ordinary difficulty, that demands consideration. I refer to the delicate and difficult question of the parties to whom Christ, as Head of the Church, has committed, in the first instance, the gift of ecclesiastical power, and in whom the right to such power primarily resides. In the old systems of divinity, this question was discussed under the head of "the proper or primary subject of Church power," or "the first receptacle of it from Christ." There is a distinction to be drawn, in connection with this matter, between the parties who in ordinary circumstances have a right to the exercise or administration of Church power, and who are set in the Christian society for that end, and the parties to whom Church power may primarily belong, and in whom it has its proper residence. These two are not necessarily the same. In the human system, the power of perception, as regards the outward world, may primarily reside in the mind that perceives; but yet it may be the eye through which such perception is carried on, although it is not the eye to which the power in the first instance belongs. It is the mind that perceives through the eye, as its organ or instrument for that special purpose. And so in the ecclesiastical system. We know that it is the office-bearers of the Church, without settling at present the question of who or what these may be, who hold the place and perform the function of the administrators of Church power; and in all ordinary circumstances, to these alone belongs the right to exercise authority within the Christian society. But it does not necessarily follow from this that Church power is a gift given by Christ primarily and dis-

tinctively to them; or that they are the parties in whom the right of Church power properly and in the first instance resides. The Church, viewed collectively, may, in contradistinction to its office-bearers, be the proper subject or receptacle of this right, although it may rule and administer power in ordinary circumstances only through the office-bearers, as its organ or instrument for that end. In short, in dealing with this question, there is a distinction to be drawn between the parties in whom Church power primarily resides, or in whom the right to it inheres, and the parties in whom the exercise or administration of it commonly resides, or to whom, in ordinary circumstances, this exercise or administration is committed. And this distinction it is important to bear along with us, if we would discuss the question of the proper subject of Church power, without confounding together things that differ.

Perhaps, in the whole range of ecclesiastical theology, there is no question in regard to which a greater diversity of judgment among competent divines has prevailed; and none, probably, in regard to which it is more necessary to speak with caution and diffidence. When there are such strong and plausible grounds for different, and even opposite opinions, and when opposite opinions have been entertained and defended by theologians of the highest name with forcible arguments, it were the reverse of wisdom to dogmatize. I would willingly indeed have refrained from pronouncing a judgment at all on a question at once so delicate and so arduous, had it not been that it is impossible to avoid the discussion in connection with our argument on the power of the Church, involving, as it does, such important consequences in the argument. Who, then, are the parties to whom primarily belongs the right of Church power, as their distinctive gift, from the Divine Head of the Church? Or, in the language of the old divines, Who are the first and proper subject of Church power? To the consideration of this topic we now address ourselves.

Very different answers have been given to this question by different parties. It lies at the foundation, indeed, more or less nearly, of all the different systems of Church power and ecclesiastical polity best known among us. A difference of opinion regarding the proper answer to the question now put, to a greater or smaller extent, involves principles immediately bearing upon the controversies which have divided Presbyterians from Independents on the one hand, and both of these from High Church-

men, whether Popish or Prelatic, on the other. The determination of the question, Who are the first and proper subject of Church power? in the one way, may go very nearly to decide the merits of the controversy between Independents and the advocates of other schemes of ecclesiastical polity; and the determination of it in another way may decide altogether against the peculiar pretensions to Church power and jurisdiction maintained by High Churchmen, whether Romanist or semi-Romanist. The consequences involved in the decision as to the first and proper subject of Church power are of a very wide and weighty kind, and the principles it carries along with it have a most important bearing on the future conduct of our whole argument.

I. The first theory in regard to the proper and primary subject of Church power that I shall mention, is that which affirms, that it was given and belongs to the office-bearers, in contradistinction to the members of the Church.

The advocates of this opinion hold that Christ, as Head of the Church, has given the gift of Church power, in the first instance, and properly, to the office-bearers of the society distinctively, as exclusive of the *cœtus fidelium*, or the community of believers; and that the right to such power primarily inheres in the rulers, as distinguished from the ruled. There is very much in the principles and statements contained in Scripture, as bearing upon the nature and constitution of the Christian Church, that may be quoted in favour of this view. It has been maintained and defended by its advocates mainly on these three general grounds: First, there seems to be in Scripture no mention of any express or formal commission or grant of Church power by Christ in favour of the Church at large, or the whole body of believers; while there does seem to be evidence in Scripture, on the other hand, that Christ intrusted to the office-bearers of the Christian society the government and administration of its affairs. The absence of any such grant to the Church at large may be argued from the silence of Scripture on the subject; while the explicit evidence of the trust actually committed to the rulers, in contradistinction to the ruled, by the Head of the Church, may be argued from the distinctive warnings given, and precepts addressed, and ordinances enjoined, to the governors of the Christian society. Second, there seems to be in the Word of God warrant for saying, that the right of Church power carries with it the right to the exercise of Church

power,—a principle which seems to involve the conclusion, that the rulers of the Christian society, who by the confession of all parties administer power within it, are the proper subjects, and that the members who do not administer power are not the proper subjects, in whom the right to it resides. The assertion, that the *cœtus fidelium* is the primary subject or receptacle of Church power, would seem to lead to the inference, that every private member of the Church has a right to exercise power in the dispensation of ordinances, in the administration of government, and in the execution of discipline, as much as the office-bearers of the society themselves. Third, from the proposition that the Church at large is the subject or receptacle of Church power, it apparently follows, that the office-bearers who commonly administer and dispense it, are not so much the servants or ministers of Christ in carrying out His authority, as the servants or delegates of the Church for that purpose; and that they hold not immediately of Christ as the Head, but of the Christian society, whose organs or instruments they are. Upon such grounds as these, aided by other arguments, it has been maintained that the office-bearers of the Christian Church, and not the Church at large, are the proper and primary depositaries of Church power; that they are separated from the other members of the Christian society, not only for the purpose of exercising the government of the Church within it, but also as the parties to whom exclusively spiritual power has been committed by Christ; and that the only right in any circumstances belonging to the *cœtus fidelium*, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers, is the right of Christian liberty, in obeying those set over them, and divinely constituted their rulers in the Lord. It cannot, I think, be denied, that there is much laid down in Scripture as to the nature and constitution of the Church which seems to give force to such arguments, and to bear out the conclusion that the office-bearers of the Church, as such, and to the exclusion of the membership, are the proper and primary depositaries of that spiritual power which Christ has committed to His Church.

This first scheme or theory in regard to the subject of Church power is held by all those parties, of whatever communion, whose principles lead them to draw a line of very broad and essential distinction between the office-bearers and the members in the Christian society, making them to be two fundamentally separate

classes, with standing and powers essentially different. Of course, the principles involved in this view of the primary and proper subject of Church power are diametrically opposed to the system of Church polity held by Independents; and if consistent with Scripture, must unavoidably lead to the inference that that system is incompatible with the Word of God. It has been held by very many Presbyterians of eminence and name as theologians. It is held under one form or another by all High Churchmen, whether they belong to the Episcopalian or Popish communion, as tending to put on a clear and distinct footing the rights of the clergy, as distinct from the members of the Church, and as necessary, under one shape or other, to bear out the doctrine which they hold of apostolical succession and priestly authority. But the theory itself is embraced by many who do not entertain the opinions that distinguish High Churchmen, and who adopt generally those principles in regard to the extent and limits of Church power by which Presbyterians are characterized. A very able defence of this first scheme of the proper subject of Church power will be found in Principal Baillie's *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Times*, written against the Independents of his day; and more especially in the *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici, or the Divine Right of Church Government*, by the London ministers.[1]

II. The second theory in regard to the proper and primary subject in which Church power resides, is the very opposite of the first: it ascribes to the Church at large those peculiar and distinctive rights which the first view restricts to the office-bearers of the Church. According to this second theory on the point, the *cœtus fidelium*, or the universal body of believers, is the proper and necessary depositary of Church power, having received the gift, along with every other needful to its existence or well-being, from its Divine Head; and the office-bearers

[1] Baillie, *Dissuasive*, chap. ix. *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part ii. chap. x. xi. Rutherford, *Peaceable Plea for Paul's Presbyterie in Scotland*, Lond. 1642, chap. i. ii. vi. *Due Right of Presbyteries*, Lond. 1644, pp. 6–20, 180–200. It is to be remarked with respect to the distinguished authors of these works, as with respect to several other theologians of that period who might easily be referred to, that they had one and all been brought into close contact and collision with the sectaries of that day, whose views and proceedings were just then threatening to frustrate the grand design of a uniformity of religion in all the three kingdoms. In recoiling from the extreme, and often dangerous, positions taken up by not a few of the Independents, it was not unnatural that men should be tempted to lean rather too much towards High Churchism.

of the society are no more than the organs or instruments of the whole body, for administering its power and discharging its functions.

These two views stand at the opposite extremes of opinion from each other, and lead to consequences very widely and directly opposed. This second theory is supported and defended, among other arguments, by these two general considerations: *First*, There seems to be some warrant in Scripture for arguing, that the foundation of all right to Church power is to be traced originally to the right of individual believers, as such, to the possession and enjoyment of all the privileges, whether spiritual or outward, which Christ has purchased for them as believers. It may be maintained—and not, as it would seem, without some ground for it in Scripture—that Church power is one of those privileges, and that it, in common with every other gift or possession necessary to their present or everlasting well-being, is secured and given to believers by Christ in consequence of their union to Himself; and that therefore the first and normal idea of Church privilege and Church power is to be traced back to the power given to every believer to become a son of God, and is, in fact, virtually included in the notion of his adoption. According to this view, then, the first or primary grant of Church power is virtually, if not formally and expressly, made over to believers, as such, in the grant given to them of all present and future blessing necessary or conducive to their complete salvation; and it is nothing more than a mere matter of convenience, and detail, and order, if this Church power is exercised or administered, not by the members personally, but by certain office-bearers, as an arrangement more calculated to promote, upon the whole, the good of the society. In the charter of his many privileges as a son of God, there is likewise written down the right of every believer to Church power along with his other rights; and no man can take from him his warrant, in consequence of his primary possession of such power, to dispense ordinances, to administer rule, and to execute discipline in his proper person, if circumstances demanded it. *Second*, There seems to be warrant in Scripture for arguing that the Church of Christ, viewed as the collective body of believers, and apart from any particular section or class of its members, must have within itself, and as its own, all that is necessary at all times, and under every conjuncture of circum-

stances, to perform its functions as a Church, and to secure the end contemplated by it in that character. Now, although there is a promise of perpetuity to the visible Church of Christ in the world, there is no such promise in regard to the ordinances of the ministry in particular, or of office-bearers in general. And it would seem unavoidably to follow, that there must be a power—latent it may be, but yet real—in the body of believers at large, to revive the ordinance of rulers or pastors, and by their own act to constitute or ordain them, in the event of such a conjunction of circumstances as should see the Church deprived of ministers and office-bearers for a time. In such circumstances—and we are not entitled to argue that it is impossible they can occur—there must be in the members of the Christian society at large a right to exercise Church power in such a way as may be necessary to restore the lost office of pastor or ruler. Upon such general grounds as these this second theory of the proper subject or depositary of Church power has been argued. And it cannot, I think, be denied that apparently there is some foundation in Scripture for such reasonings, whether or not they bear out the general conclusion which they are employed to support, that the primary seat of Church power is the *cœtus fidelium*, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers of the Christian society.

This second scheme of Church power, so opposite apparently to the first, is held under one or other modification by those whose Church principles lead them to deny or extenuate the distinction, laid down broadly and fundamentally by others, between the two orders of the rulers and the ruled in the Christian society. It is embraced universally by the Independents; and when carried out to extremes, as it usually is by them, it is irreconcilable with the Church principles held both by Presbyterians, and by all those who cherish yet higher doctrines in regard to Church authority than Presbyterians. This second theory, as generally stated and pushed to an extreme point by Independents, annihilates the distinction between the governors and the governed in the Christian society; and in regard to this matter is almost equally opposed to the principles entertained by all parties but themselves, to the views of Presbyterians nearly as much as to those of Prelatists and Romanists. A full exposition and defence of this theory will be found in the works of most Independent controversialists. It is very ably stated, but with some impor-

tant modifications, by Dr. Owen in his *True Nature of a Gospel Church*.[1]

III. There is a third theory in regard to the proper and primary subject or depositary of Church power, which, in so far as I have been able to judge, comes much more close to the truth than either of the views now explained. It is intermediate between the first and the second, and combines in itself what seems to be true in both. According to this third view of the matter, Church power belongs of right, and in consequence of the institution of Christ, not to the office-bearers alone, as contradistinguished from the whole body of believers; nor to the whole body of believers alone, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers. It is not, as according to the first theory, the peculiar and distinctive gift of Christ to the office-bearers, and from them and through them enjoyed by the Church at large. Nor is it, as according to the second theory, the peculiar and distinctive gift of Christ to the whole body of believers exclusively, and by them delegated and permitted to the office-bearers. This third theory ascribes the right of Church power not to the one or the other exclusively, but to both; and to both in accordance with their respective characters and places in the Christian society. According to this third scheme of Church power, it resides by gift and warrant from Christ in both the *cœtus fidelium*, or body of believers at large, and in the office-bearers more particularly; and

[1] Owen, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xvi. pp. 36–40. With respect to the communication of Church power from Christ, and its distribution and residence in the Christian society, Owen lays down the following positions: 1. Every individual believer has power given him to become a son of God, and as such has a right to all the privileges of His Church, "to be actually possessed and used according to the rules by Him prescribed." 2. "Two or three" of such believers have power to meet together in Christ's name for prayer, exhortation, etc. 3. A suitable number of believers have power formally to constitute themselves into a Church, and make a joint confession of faith. 4. For the completion of the Church state thus formed, they have power from Christ to choose and set apart certain of their number to fill among them the offices which He has appointed in His Church. "It is a certain rule," Owen concludes, "that *in the performance of all duties which the Lord Christ requires, either of the whole Church or of any in the Church, especially of the officers, they are the first subject of the power needful unto such duties who are immediately called unto them.*" In this important statement Owen seems to approximate very closely to, if indeed he does not altogether adopt, the view of those who hold that both the office-bearers and the members are the subject of Church power, according to the nature of their respective positions and duties in the Christian society, but neither of them alone and exclusively. See also Cotton, *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, chap. vii.; Wardlaw, *Congregational Independency*, chap. v.–vii

each participates in the Divine right according to the especial character each bears, as administrators of the power or as administered unto.

Does the whole body of believers, as believers, possess every privilege or blessing which is necessary to their present and future salvation? Then the outward provision which Christ has established of power and authority in His Church is *theirs*, as much as any other blessing which Christ has purchased and bestows; and it is *theirs*, in the *first instance*, as His spiritual body; and they enjoy and participate in it in so far as their special character and place in the Church as private members demands or permits. Church power belongs properly to them as regards its possession, its benefits, and the right of obeying it. Do the office-bearers hold another character and place in the Christian society, over and above what belongs to them as members; and are they set in the Church for administration and service to the rest? Then Church power belongs of right to themselves, in the *first instance*, and in connection with the other members of the society, as members; but, in the *second instance*, in their further and additional character as administrators or office-bearers; and they enjoy and participate in it in so far as their peculiar character *as* office-bearers demands or permits. Church power belongs properly to them as regards its exercise and administration. According to this third opinion, the right of Church power inheres equally and by Divine appointment in the members and the office-bearers of the Church as its proper subject; but it inheres in the members who are not office-bearers, and in the members who are under a different character and aspect. To the members, as members, Church power belongs, to use a distinction of the old divines, "*in actu primo seu in esse;*" to the members who are office-bearers it belongs, in their character as office-bearers, "*in actu secundo seu in operari.*" The possession of the right of Church power can properly be denied to neither; although it belongs to the one, under ordinary circumstances, for different purposes and objects than those for which it belongs to the other. Church power belongs essentially to the Church at large, or the whole body of believers, whether office-bearers or not, that they may enjoy its benefits, and use the right to submit to its wholesome authority,—and this in the *first instance*. Church power belongs essentially to the Church at large, and more particularly

to the believers within it who are office-bearers, that they may administer and exercise it for the good of the rest,—and this in the *second instance*. It belongs equally and by Divine warrant to both; but under different characters, suited to the different places each party occupies in the Christian Church.

This third scheme of Church power seems to combine in it all the truth which is to be found connected with the two theories before mentioned; while it is not liable to the objections that might be fairly urged from opposite directions against both the one and the other. That there is a foundation of truth in the arguments brought in support both of the first and second scheme respectively, it were hardly possible to deny; and what grounds in Scripture there may be fairly alleged for the one or the other, seem to combine in recommending the third or intermediate theory to our adoption. 1*st*, It is true, as is alleged in support of the first theory, that there is in Scripture a very express and formal grant of Church authority to the office-bearers of the society; and perhaps it is also true that there is no equally formal or express grant to the whole body of believers. But it may be doubted whether, on the one hand, the express grant of power to the office-bearers includes more than a gift of this power for the purpose of administering or exercising it; and whether, on the other hand, the want of an equally formal grant to the whole body of believers is not compensated for by what is implied in the right and privilege of a believer, to whom with Christ, and because Christ's, all things belong. And if so, the undoubted truth that there is in the argument to a certain extent, only goes to corroborate and strengthen the third hypothesis. 2*d*, It is true also, as urged in confirmation of the first theory, that the right of Church power carries with it the right to exercise the power as well as to possess it, and that those who do legitimately possess the power may also legitimately exercise it. But this general proposition, although true, does not necessarily lead to the inference that every private member of the Church, *in ordinary circumstances*, may himself administer ordinances and government; if it is also true that there is in the office-bearers of the Christian society equally by Divine institution and grant, a right to Church power "*in actu secundo*," and for the *ordinary* exercise and administration of it. On the contrary, the undoubted truth of the general proposition leads to this inference, and no further,

that, in *extraordinary* emergencies, and in the absence of such office-bearers in the Church, the private members have a right of power that enables them to replace the office when lost. In so far, the general proposition only goes in this way to support the third scheme. *3d*, It is true once more, as is alleged on behalf of the first theory, that the office-bearers of the Church are ministers of Christ, and not of the Christian society, in the sense that they hold their office and draw their authority immediately and directly from Him, and not from the delegation of the Church simply and only as its organs. But it may be doubted whether it follows from this truth that the whole body of believers cannot hold the right of power directly and immediately from Christ also, side by side with a right, in the second instance and for a different purpose, to the office-bearers from Christ to administer and exercise it. The right to the office-bearers for the exercise of Church power, and the right to the body of believers for the possession of Church power for a different purpose, and both equally and directly from Christ, are quite consistent with each other; and they seem not unequivocally to point in favour of the third hypothesis in regard to the proper subject of Church power, which excludes neither, but embraces both.

But if we turn to the general considerations urged in behalf of the second theory of Church power, we shall find no less that there is a foundation of truth in them also; and that, in so far as they are true, they serve to countenance the third hypothesis; and in so far as they are not true, but exaggerated, they tend to invalidate the argument in favour of the theory they are brought to support. *4th*, It is true, as argued in behalf of the second scheme, that the foundation to all right to Church power, as well as to every other Christian privilege, must ultimately be traced back to the right which every believer is invested with, in consequence of his union to Christ and adoption into the family of God; and that the primary grant from Christ of Church power is virtually, if not expressly and formally, made to believers in that grant which makes all things, whether pertaining to the present or the future, to be theirs in Christ Jesus.[1] But it does not follow from this general truth that Church power was given by Christ to the body of believers to the exclusion of the office-bearers as having equally, and no less directly from Christ, the

[1] [Claude, *Défense de la Réformation*, 4me Partie, chap. iii. 6.]

grant of *administration* of the same power. On the contrary, both of these grants are true, and equally true; and because it is so, we seem unavoidably shut up to the third hypothesis, which ascribes Church power not to one of the parties exclusively as the proper depositary of it, but to both. *5th*, It is true also, as urged in support of the second opinion, that the whole body of believers as such must have within themselves all power competent to carry on the necessary functions and offices of a Church; and that therefore they must have the right in extraordinary emergencies, as when the office of pastor or ruler becomes extinct, to put forth their power to restore the office by their own authority, and at their own hands. But it does not follow from this that the office of ruler is not of Divine warrant and indispensable in the Church, or that he is no more than the organ or delegate of the Church itself, having no power but what is common to all. It is true that Church power belongs "*in actu primo*" to the whole collective body of believers; but it is no less true that it belongs "*in actu secundo*" to the office-bearers for the purpose of exercise and administration.[1] And if it is, it points not indistinctly to the third hypothesis as the true one. In short, it is by the combination of the first with the second hypothesis so as to make up the third, that the true view of the subject of Church power is to be obtained,—the first and second being modified and shorn of their extreme peculiarities so as to admit of the combination. The proper and primary depositary or subject of Church power is not the office-bearers exclusively, nor the whole body of believers exclusively, but both equally, although in different ways and for different purposes.

The views which I have now endeavoured to explain are those maintained in substance by many of the most eminent Presbyterian divines.[2] They are set forth, for example, and defended with great ability and learning, in Voetius. The Confession of

[1] [Köstlin, *Luther's Lehre von der Kirche*, Stuttgart 1853, pp. 26–46, 54–72, 141, etc. Claude, *Déf. de la Réform.*, 4me Partie, chap. iii. 7, 8. Cf. the passage from Tostatus of Abyla, quoted by Claude.]

[2] Apollonius brings to a close his discussion of this question in the following words: "Concludimus igitur ligandi et solvendi authoritatem pertinere ad totam Ecclesiam collective consideratam, in actu primo, seu in esse; ad Ecclesiam representative consideratam, id est, ad Presbyterium solum, in actu secundo, seu in operari."—*Jus Majest. circa sacra*, Pars ii. cap. i. p. 16, Medioburgi Zelandorum 1643. For an opinion by the same author, somewhat different and more expressly pointed against the Independent views

Faith appears to me to state the same doctrine, although it does so in very general terms, and although I am aware that by some it is held not authoritatively to decide the question, but rather to leave it an open one. I cannot help, however, regarding the doctrine laid down in the third section of the 25th chapter, when taken in its natural sense, and in connection with the context, as substantially the view which I have now sought to advocate,—namely that, in the *first instance*, the power of the Church has been committed by Christ to the whole body of believers; while in other passages the Confession no less lays down the doctrine that, in the *second instance*, Christ has appointed a government peculiarly in the hands of Church officers. In the 25th chapter, after defining the visible Church to be "all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children," it announces the following brief but pregnant proposition: "Unto this catholic visible Church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and

then current in England, see his *Consideratio quarund. Controv.*, addressed to the London Synod in 1644, pp. 43–49, 51–78.

Gillespie, in his masterly work, *A Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies*, first published in 1637, maintains the view stated above,—namely, that both the office-bearers and the members of the Church are alike the proper and primary subject of Church power, although in different ways and for different ends (p. 166, in *Presbyt. Arm.* vol. i.).

After witnessing, however, along with Rutherford and Baillie, the state of matters in England at the time of the Westminster Assembly, he seems, to a certain extent, to have shared with them in their strong recoil from the ecclesiastical democracy of the Independents. In his *CXI. Propositions concerning Church Government*, Gillespie makes statements somewhat inconsistent with his own former position (Prop. 7 and 75); although it might perhaps be held doubtful, from the wording of the first of the Propositions referred to, whether it is not only the *exercise* of Church power in all ordinary circumstances which he restricts so decidedly to the ministers and elders of the Church. These CXI. Propositions were not sanctioned immediately by the General Assembly of our Church to which they were submitted, from lack of time fully to consider them. They were referred for judgment to the Theological Faculties of the four Scottish Universities, and were also sent abroad for the consideration of foreign Churches. And Voetius, in the name of the Theological Faculty of Utrecht, while bestowing high praise on the learning, ability, and soundness in the faith evinced by the author of Propositions, put his finger at once on the 7th and the 75th. "There ought," he said, "to be some limitation put on these two theorems, lest the whole body of the people, as distinct from the consistory of office-bearers, should seem to be excluded absolutely, and under all circumstances whatsoever, from any share of Church power, both as regards the possession and the use of it."—Voetius, *Pol. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. i. tract. ii. cap. v. Qu. 11–33, where his correspondence with Gillespie is given.

doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto."[1]

The doctrine now advocated in regard to the proper subject of Church power has most wide and important bearings both on the principles of Independency and on the principles of High Churchmen, whether belonging to the communion of Prelacy or Romanism. It denies the fundamental dogma upon which, on the one side and on the other, the views of those parties are founded. It denies the fundamental dogma of Independency, which ascribes all Church power in the first instance to the members of the Church, to the exclusion of the office-bearers. And it denies the fundamental dogma of the fond idolaters of Church power, whether Episcopalian or Romish, who ascribe a priestly power and virtue to a peculiar and separate order of men in the office of the ministry, to the exclusion of the whole body of believers, and independent of the Church at large. Upon these applications of our doctrine I have not now time to enter; but I postpone them with less regret, as I shall have occasion to take them up at subsequent stages in our discussions.

[1] Conf. chap. xxv. 2, 3.

PART III.—MATTERS IN REGARD TO WHICH CHURCH POWER IS EXERCISED.

DIVISION I.

CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO DOCTRINE.

CHAPTER I.

POWER OF THE CHURCH IN MATTERS OF FAITH.

WE have now brought to a close our discussions under the second great division of our subject. Under it we have considered generally the power of the Church as regards its source, its rule, its nature, its extent and limits, its end or design, and lastly, the proper and primary subject in which it inheres or resides. In the department of argument upon which we now enter, it must be our aim to consider the exercise of Church power somewhat more in detail, and to discuss its various aspects when directed to the different objects about which it is employed. In entering on this field, it were open to us to follow the ordinary and well-established division of Church power into three branches: the "potestas δογματικη," the "potestas διατακτικη," and the "potestas διακριτικη." But I have preferred, as the more convenient course, to adopt an arrangement of the discussion founded upon the different matters about which Church power is employed, and following the natural connection among them. The order to be adopted, according to this method, will be almost the same as that dictated by the ordinary and ancient division; but it will be marked out somewhat more in detail in connection with the various matters in regard to which Church power is exercised. These matters naturally fall to be distributed into four divisions: *first*, the exercise of Church power with respect to matters of faith or doctrine; *second*, the exercise of Church power in regard

to ordinances; *third*, the exercise of Church power in connection with discipline; and *fourth*, the exercise of Church power in reference to government. This last division, or the exercise of Church power in connection with government, embraces so wide a field of argument, and so many important topics, that it may more conveniently be considered apart from the rest, and it will therefore be elevated into the position of a distinct and leading department of our subject, to be discussed after the present, and to be treated of under the general head of the "Parties in whom the administration of Church power is vested." Under this fourth general department of the course will come to be discussed the constitution, government, and office-bearers of the Christian Church.

In the meantime, in entering, as we now do, on the third general department of the course, we have before us the consideration of those topics which fall to be argued under the threefold division of the exercise of Church power, as it regards, *first*, doctrine; *second*, ordinances; *third*, discipline. It is to the first of these that we now proceed to direct our attention. What is the office assigned to the Church of Christ in regard to that revelation of Word and doctrine which Christ has given? What is the authority with which the Church has been invested, and what the lawful exercise of that authority in connection with the faith once delivered unto the saints? The answer to this question will lead us to consider some highly important duties assigned to the Christian Church in the exercise of ecclesiastical power.

There are two general aspects under which we have already been taught to recognise the Church of Christ; between which it may not perhaps be always possible to draw a well-defined line, but which are sufficiently marked to serve the purpose of giving a more distinct and detailed exhibition of her office in regard to matters of doctrine. The Church may be viewed more especially in reference to those within her pale; or the Church may be viewed more especially in reference to those without.

I. In regard to those within, the Church is the official holder and teacher of the Word of God.

This is plainly implied in such designations given to the Church as these, "the pillar and ground of the truth;" in such instructions given to its office-bearers as this, "The things which thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;" and in the general commis-

sion addressed to the ministers of the Gospel, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The very existence on the earth of a supernatural communication of His own wisdom from God for the instruction and salvation of men, imposes upon the Church the duty both to keep it, that it may be guarded from injury or destruction, and to teach it, that it may accomplish the very ends for which it has been given. The Church is the institute of God on earth to preserve His truth, that it may not perish from the hostility directed against it by an unbelieving world, and that the inspired Book which contains the record of it may be kept pure and unmutilated as it came from the hands of its Author. In this respect the Church is the keeper of a precious deposit, made over to it in this world for the highest ends connected both with the glory of God and the good of man. But more than this. Over and above the preservation and defence of the truth, there is laid upon the Church the additional duty of the teaching of the truth. The Book which contains the inspired record of that truth is written in a language known now only to the learned, and spoken nowhere among the nations; and what the gift of tongues was designed to effect in regard to the primitive disciples, to whom the Gospel was first addressed, is now to be accomplished by means of a body of instructors, specially set apart and educated for the purpose of their becoming the interpreters and expounders on behalf of others of the Divine oracles. Instead of perpetuating or renewing in every successive age the miracle of Pentecost, there has been instituted a perpetual and standing ordinance of interpreters and teachers, who may both translate and explain the original Scriptures for the benefit of the members of the Church at large; thus supplying the want of knowledge and of learning in the great body of the Christian society, and superseding the necessity of a private translation by every individual reader of the Bible for himself. The succession of teachers in the Christian Church have it for their office to afford to the disciples at large that assistance in the interpretation and elucidation of the books of Scripture which the nature of the language in which they are written, the customs of the times in which they were penned, and the peculiarities of the persons first addressed, along with the want of knowledge or

learning on the part of the great majority of the members of the Church in every age, render so indispensable. But further still: they are in a peculiar manner the ambassadors of Christ on behalf of men, commissioned to preach His Gospel in His name; and speaking with authority, not their own, but His, to unfold and expound and proclaim the message of His mercy to His people. In such an office there is implied the right, not by permission or sufferance of man, but by direct authority from Christ as Head of His Church, to deal with Divine truth on the one hand, and with the human understanding and conscience to which it is addressed on the other, in the way of teaching and expounding and instructing; in short, to preach, to exhort, to warn, to beseech in the name and by the authoritative warrant of Him who has sent them. The office of the Church through its office-bearers, in so far as it bears on those within, and in reference to matters of doctrine, is to be both the authorized guardian and the teacher of the Word of God.

II. With respect to those without, the office of the Christian Church is to be the authoritative witness and protest for the truth of God.

Doubtless the first and primary duty of the Church has respect to those that are the members of the Christian society. But its duty does not terminate with them. It has an office of a somewhat different character to discharge in regard to the world without, as being an authoritative witness to the world on behalf of God's truth, and a no less authoritative protest against its unbelief and its errors. The duty of a teacher to its own members the Church discharges through means of a standing ministry, commissioned to expound the Word of God, and to proclaim its truths. The duty of a witness or a protest against an unbelieving world the Church may perform through means of the same instrumentality of ministers or missionaries bearing testimony against its unbelief. But it is not only, or perhaps chiefly, in this way that a Church discharges this office towards the world. There must ever be a large amount of error, speculative as well as practical, found in that portion of the world professedly and openly avowing its rejection of the Bible. There must always be a large amount of speculative error or doctrinal heresy even in that other portion of the world that professes to receive the Bible, but in reality denies its essential truths. Our Lord Himself warns His

disciples of "false prophets, who should come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." The apostles lived to see the fulfilment of the prediction; and they tell us in many parts of their writings of men who had "corrupted the Word of God," even while they professed to hold it; who "erred concerning the truth," even with the truth in their hands; who "brought in damnable heresies," even while pretending to retain the Scriptures. The statements of the inspired writers plainly indicate that a professed acknowledgment of Scripture is no effectual barrier against falsehood and deadly error; and they seem very expressly to indicate that it is necessary for the Church to adopt some additional precaution against error and unbelief, beyond the mere keeping entire and pure the Word of God intrusted to its keeping. Against that portion of the world that rejects the truth professedly and wholly, and against that other portion of the world that, under the pretence of acknowledging it, brings in deadly heresy, it is necessary that the Church should not merely bear witness for the truth, but more especially and directly bear its protest against error. "It is impossible but that offences must come," both from the world without, and from those even professedly within the Church, but who have afterwards joined the world in its unbelief or in its heresy; and necessity is laid upon the Church to erect some specific barrier against the evil. And this office of a protest the Church has usually discharged by framing and exhibiting a summary of truth, or confession of faith, directed particularly against the particular heresy or unbelief which may have arisen; so that, in addition to defending and preaching the truth, it may bear specific testimony against the corresponding falsehood. Such human exhibitions of truth and summaries of doctrine serve the twofold purpose of being, *first*, a witness for the truth, and *second*, a protest against the relative error. Generally indeed it has been the felt necessity for the latter, or for protesting against the heresies or falsehoods that were endangering the doctrine of Christ and abounding in the world without, that has called forth from the Church the publication of these "forms of sound words;" and this their frequent origin will explain the form they usually have, of rather negatively testifying against error than positively witnessing to the truth. But confessions of faith, or human compilations of doctrine, emitted by the Church in addition to the Scriptures, have properly both characters,—that of a testimony for

the doctrine of Christ, and a testimony against the unbelief that would deny or the heresy that would pervert it. In addition to defending and teaching the Word of God, it is the duty of the Church, in discharging her office in regard to matters of doctrine, to be a witness and protest for the truth in the face of the world.[1]

In both these ways, then, the Church exercises her proper power and authority in regard to matters of doctrine. The Church is the guardian and teacher of truth more especially in reference to her own members. The Church is the witness and protest in behalf of truth and against error more especially in reference to the world without. The power of the Church in regard to doctrine is a real power, and not merely a nominal one. The authority of the Church in matters of faith is a true, although a restricted authority. When the Church through its appointed organs declares the truth, it is to be heard not only because it is truth, and because it is in accordance with the Word of God as revealed in the Bible, but also because the Church is an ordinance of God appointed to declare it. When the Church gives a decision in controversies of faith or in matters of doctrine, it is to be listened to not simply because the decision is right and justified by Scripture, but also because the Church has authority to give such decisions. First and chiefly indeed, the proclamations of the truth by the Church, or its judgment in any controversy of faith, are to be heard and obeyed because they are in harmony with the revealed mind of God; and they have authority over the conscience and understanding of men, because virtually they are the utterance and decision of God through the Church. But second, and in subordination to this, the preaching of the Gospel, and the testimony against error and in favour of the truth by the Church, are authoritative and binding also because the Church is the ordinance of God, warranted and commissioned so to preach and so to testify. In short, there is an authority binding upon the conscience in the truth itself, when preached and declared, because it *is* the truth; and this in the first instance, and principally. There is an authority also in the Church itself, when so preaching and declaring, to bring the obligation on the conscience, because it *is* the Church; and this in the second instance, and subordinately.

[1] Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions of Faith*, edited by Dr. Buchanan, London 1857, pp. 19–40, 180–190.

But in coming to a right understanding on the subject, it is no less important to bear in mind the limits set to this authority of the Church in regard to matters of faith and doctrine. The particular exercise of Church power in this matter is limited and restricted by all those general principles which we had occasion already to acknowledge, as setting bounds to the general administration of Church power. *First*, It is a spiritual authority; and therefore, although it may preach and declare the truth of God so as really to bind the conscience, it cannot enforce the obligation by outward compulsion, or by any except spiritual means. *Second*, It is an authority derived and exercised from Christ; and therefore, although in His name and exercising His right, it may proclaim His word and decide on His behalf in matters of faith, yet this power is purely ministerial and subordinate to Him, and has no binding force except as His authority. *Third*, It is an authority to be exercised according to the rule of the Word of God; and therefore the Church cannot add to or alter the doctrines there revealed, or preach any other Gospel than what is there put into its mouth. *Finally*, It is an authority to be administered in conformity with the purchased liberties of Christ's people; and therefore, although the Church may, as a delegate of Christ and steward of His mysteries, unfold and declare His doctrine, yet it must ever be under reservation of the rights of conscience in the individual, and in subordination, as regards the claims on his belief and submission, to the liberty of private judgment.

There are two systems of religious opinion, very opposite to each other, that equally sin, although in opposite directions, against the general principles now laid down in reference to the power of the Church in matters of faith. The one of these denies the *limitation* now ascribed to Church authority in connection with doctrine; the other of these denies the *extent* now attributed to it. The first is the Popish theory of Church power in matters of faith; the second is the Socinian or Rationalistic theory.

1*st*. The Romish theory of Church power in matters of faith is a striking and most instructive example of the ruinous consequences resulting from a flagrant disregard of all those limitations which have been divinely set to the possession and exercise of Church authority by the ecclesiastical body. There are views —semi-Romish—entertained by High Churchmen of other communions, which in a lesser degree afford a similar example and

warning.[1] But it is only necessary to deal specifically with the Romish system, which includes and embraces all the rest. There are three separate stages or assumptions in the argument by which the Church of Rome develops its theory of Church authority in matters of faith.

First, The Church of Rome pretends that it is only from her that men can learn what is and what is not the written revelation of God, and that the authority of Scripture and its right to the faith and obedience of men depend exclusively upon the word of the Church. "For now"—I quote the language of Cardinal Wiseman, in his *Lectures on the Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*—"Now the Church stands forth with that authority wherewith she is invested by Christ, and proclaims: Under that guarantee of Divine assistance which the words of Christ in whom you believe have given me, I pronounce that this book contains the revealed Word of God, and is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it contains all that has a right to enter into the sacred collection. And thus," continues he, "the Catholic at length arrives, on the authority of the Church, at these two important doctrines of the canon and the inspiration of Scripture, which I endeavoured to show it was almost, if not quite, impossible to reach by any course of ordinary human investigation."[2] The fundamental question, then, of what is and what is not inspired and canonical Scripture, depends for its settlement entirely upon the authority of the Church; and no man can have a satisfactory assurance upon this vital question except from the word and judgment of the Church. To fix the canon of Scripture,—to determine what is and what is not the infallible written Word of God,—to decide what is entitled to be believed as God's, and what deserves to be rejected as man's,—is a work for the Church alone by its authority to accomplish; and that not as an historical witness to an historical fact, but as a judge by its absolute and infallible authority in a matter of faith.

Second, Besides the written Word which men are obliged to receive upon the authoritative determination of the Church, there is also an unwritten word, as tradition, of equal authority and

[1] [Litton, *Church of Christ*, Lond. 1851, pp. 659-664. Goode, *Rule of Faith*, Preface, etc.]

[2] Wiseman, *Lectures on the Prin. Doct. and Pract. of the Cath. Church*, Lond. 1847, p. 64.

no less Divine, which is intrusted to the keeping of the Romish Church, and when revealed in her teaching and declaration, is to be received with the same implicit faith and entire submission. In its fourth session, the Council of Trent, speaking in name of the Popish Church, declared that "every saving truth and discipline of morals is contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which, being received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Holy Spirit dictating to the apostles, have, as it were, transmitted by hand, reached even to us;" and that the Council "receives and venerates with the same pious affection and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; and also the traditions themselves relating both to faith and morals, which have been, as it were, orally declared either by Christ or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved by continual succession in the Catholic Church."[1] The two sources, then, of infallible and Divine truth, the written and the unwritten Word, are, according to the Popish system, both equally in the official custody of the Church; and both are alike dependent for their acceptance with men on the authoritative declaration of that Church. The truth of God, whether communicated through His written Word or through the channel of tradition, is truth to man only in so far as, and no further than, it is declared so to be by the authority of the Church.

But, third, the development of Church authority in the Papacy did not terminate here. The Church of Rome, to complete the fabric of spiritual despotism established by her in matters of doctrine and faith, not only asserted her right to be the unchallenged and irresponsible keeper of the Word of God, whether written or unwritten: she claimed also to be the sole and the infallible interpreter of its meaning. In the same session of the Council of Trent, it is decreed that "no one, trusting to his own judgment, shall dare, in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, to interpret the sacred Scripture itself, twisting it to his own meaning, against the sense which has been and is held by holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge concerning the true sense and interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, nor against the unanimous consent of the Fathers, even although such interpretations should never be published. Let those who shall act contrary to these decrees be denounced

[1] Concilii Trident. Canones et Decreta, Sess. iv. De. Canon Script.

by the ordinaries, and punished with the penalties by law established."[1] But the Creed of Pope Pius IV. went even a step further than the bishops in synod assembled at Trent. The decree of the Tridentine Council merely forbids any man to judge of the meaning of Scripture for himself, and *against* the unanimous consent of the Fathers. The Creed of Pius IV., sworn to by every Romish priest at ordination, limits the right of interpretation still further, and makes it a crime for any man to interpret the written Word of God, "*except according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.*"[2] By these three separate and distinct steps or stages, the ecclesiastical power of the Church of Rome in matters of doctrine was developed, until it became a spiritual despotism, ruling both over the truth of God and the understandings and consciences of men, with authority absolute, irresponsible, unrestricted, and infallible. The doctrines of Christ and the reason of men were equally and alike made subject to its power.

This is not the place for entering into the argument respecting the authority of the written Word of God as the rule of faith and practice, in opposition to the flagrant pretensions of the Church of Rome to dictate by its sole and irresponsible power as

[1] Sess. iv., de editione et usu sacrorum librorum.

[2] Bulla, Pii IV., *Super forma juramenti professionis fidei*, 1564. [This Bull ends with, "Be it lawful, therefore, to no man whatsoever to infringe upon this page of our will and command, or to go against it by any rash daring. If any one, however, shall presume to attempt this, let him know that he will incur the indignation of Almighty God, and of His blessed apostles Peter and Paul." "Whenever, therefore," says Dr. Cunningham, "a Popish priest proceeds to interpret a text, we are entitled, in terms of his oath, to insist that he produce to us the unanimous consent of the Fathers as to its meaning; and if he cannot do this, he is sworn to abstain from interpreting it altogether. But the truth is, there is no such thing as the unanimous consent of the Fathers in regard to the meaning of any of the texts whose import is a subject of controversy. There is as much diversity of opinion among the Fathers in regard to the interpretation of Scripture, as there is among Protestant commentators; and it should be added, that there is more nonsense and absurdity in the interpretation of Scripture to be found in the writings of the Fathers, than among any authors who have been generally esteemed in any of the Protestant Churches. With respect to the meaning of almost all the passages usually discussed in the controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome, all Papists of learning are fully aware that the Fathers are not agreed. When Papists, therefore, boast of the unanimous consent of the Fathers, they are guilty of deliberate fraud; and the oath which all Popish priests have taken, 'Never to interpret Scripture *except according to* the unanimous consent of the Fathers,' can be kept only by their abstaining wholly from interpreting any portions of the Bible, except those in the interpretation of which all men of sane mind are unanimous."—Cunningham's ed. of Stillingfleet, referred to below, p. 136.]

to the canon, the doctrines, and the meaning of the Scriptures. I have adduced the example of the Papacy as the most striking and instructive instance in the history of the Church of ecclesiastical power trespassing beyond the limits assigned to it by God, when exercised about matters of doctrine and faith; and breaking through all the restrictions appointed to it by the authority of Christ as its Head, by the plainest declarations of the Word of Christ as its rule, by its own character as a spiritual authority, and by a regard to the blood-bought liberties of Christ's people as its proper bound.[1]

2d. But there is another system of religious opinion, very different from the Popish, that equally sins, although in an opposite direction, against the general principles already laid down in relation to the power of the Church in matters of doctrine and faith. The Popish theory proceeds upon the denial of the proper *limits* that are set to Church power in regard to the doctrines of religion. The Socinian or Rationalistic theory proceeds upon the denial of the proper *extent* assigned to Church authority in such matters. The system of the Rationalists, under all its various modifications, in reference to the office of reason in religion, does not leave any room for the possibility of the exercise of authority in any shape or to any effect within the province of doctrine. More than this. It goes further than to the effect of annihilating all Church authority in regard to doctrine; it annihilates the authority of doctrine and Divine truth itself, in so far as it is not the dictate or offspring of reason. By making reason the sole or supreme judge of what is and is not true in the statements of Scripture,—by giving to each man's own natural understanding the place of arbiter between what, in the revelation of God, is to be believed, and what in it is to be rejected,—by constituting the private opinion of each individual the test of Divine truth, the theory of the Rationalist goes to destroy all authority whatever, whether it be the authority of God speaking in His word, and claiming a right absolutely to bind the conscience, or whether it be the authority of the Church, speaking in His name, and so ministerially claiming a certain limited right to be heard and regarded

[1] [Stillingfleet. *Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome*, edited by Dr. Cunningham, Edin. 1837. pp. 10, 107-116, 125-129, 132-138, 140-149. The editor's notes in this work form about half the volume, and are at least as valuable as the original text.]

also. According to this system, the doctrine of Church power in relation to matters of faith is not a reality, but a name. There is no room left for the authority of the servant when that of the Master is previously denied. There can be nothing in the power of the Church in reference to doctrines of religion, when the power of Christ Himself in reference to them, in so far as He claims to dictate to the reason, or impose obligation on the understanding and conscience, is altogether disowned. Upon the theory of Socinians and other Rationalists respecting ecclesiastical authority in regard to the truths and doctrines of religion, the office of the Church is not authoritatively to teach and declare the truth, but only to exhort, and to recommend the truth. It is an office, not of instruction, but of persuasion; and the Church, both in its collective councils and in the individual ministrations of its pastors, has no authority beyond that of exhortation or advice. In short, the Church and the ministrations of the Church have no higher place or standing than that of a mere human adviser or counsellor in religious matters; it is not an ordinance of God clothed with authority in these things, and because of its Divine origin and commission claiming a right to be heard in a manner that no other party has a right to be heard.

The Popish system, under whatever modification it is held, essentially sins against Scriptural principles on the subject of ecclesiastical authority in religious truth, by denying its proper and legitimate limits. The Rationalistic system, under whatever modifications it is held, no less sins against Scriptural principles on the subject of ecclesiastical authority in religious truth, by denying its proper and legitimate extent. The harmony of Church authority and private judgment, of ecclesiastical right and individual liberty, is to be maintained only by a due regard both to the extent and limits of Church power in matters of religious truth. "It belongeth to Synods and Councils," says the Confession of Faith, "ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word."[1]

[1] Conf. c. xxxi. 3. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. c. viii. 1, 6, 9, c. ix. 8. Turret. tom. iii. loc. xviii. Qu. 30. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 50–54, 172–178.]

CHAPTER II.

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS; OR SUBORDINATE STANDARDS: THEIR LAWFULNESS AND USE.

Viewed generally in reference to those within its pale, the Church is the authorized custodier and teacher of Divine truth; viewed generally in reference to those beyond its pale, the Church is the authorized witness and protest for that truth against unbelief and error. In discharging such offices, it is competent for the Church authoritatively to declare the truth of God, and to testify against falsehood; always under reservation of an appeal by those to whom she ministers to the Word of God as the supreme rule, and to Christ Himself as the Judge of last resort in the matter. Within the boundary of such a limitation the authority of the Church is real and valid in controversies of faith and cases of conscience; and it has, in consequence of its place and character as a servant of Christ, and bearing His commission for that end, a right to be heard both where it declares the truth and where it protests against the falsehood, not only because its judgment is justified by the Word of God, but also because it has received Divine gifts for judging, and Divine warrant so to judge. Ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith as it is given to the Church to administer, and the right of conscience in matters of faith, such as each man must exercise for himself, are opposite, but not irreconcilable forces in the Church system. To me, as an individual member of the Christian society, the authority of my own conscience under God is absolute and supreme to the effect of determining my own belief. But this does not destroy, although it may limit, the authority of the Church in the matter. In virtue of its character as a Divine appointment, set in the Christian society for that very end, the Church has a right to declare the truth; and that not in the shape only of counsel or advice, but in the shape of authoritative declaration as an official teacher; and I

am bound to pay a measure of deference to its decisions, and to hear it when it speaks.

No doubt, my own convictions may remain unchanged. I may be unable to acquiesce in the ecclesiastical decision, or to believe as the Church has declared; and asserting the superior right of my own conscience to be obeyed and listened to, I may be constrained to reject its determination in a matter of doctrine, and to abide by my own. I may appeal from the tribunal of the Church without, to the tribunal of conscience within; or I may carry the appeal higher still, and transfer the cause from the bar of the Church on earth, to the bar of its Divine Head in heaven. And in doing so on just and competent grounds, I shall be free from the binding obligation of the authority of the Church, which it would seek to lay upon the conscience. But that authority is not less a real authority, although it be thus inferior and subordinate both to my own conscience and to Christ. The Church has a certain authority in matters of faith, although it is itself under authority also. It is the inferior tribunal; and over it, with the right of appeal open to every man on competent grounds, there is the tribunal of conscience; and over both, with the same right of appeal open, there is the tribunal of Christ. But the authority of conscience is a real authority, although limited by and inferior to the authority of Christ. And the authority of the Church is a real authority also, although limited by and inferior to the authority both of individual conscience and of Christ. These three as ordinances of God, having right to lay an obligation on men's understanding and belief in matters of faith, although different, are not inconsistent with each other. *First*, as absolute and supreme stands the authority of Christ, as both Head of every man, and also Head of the Church. *Second*, and next to that, stands the authority of conscience, inferior to Christ's, and yet superior as regards the individual to every other law save Christ's. And *third*, and inferior to both as respects the understanding and belief of the individual, stands the authority of the Church,—a real authority, but strictly limited, and having an appeal open to the higher tribunals.

There is one form, however, in which the power of the Church is exercised in the province of religious truth, which I had occasion to refer to previously, but to which I would now wish somewhat more in detail to direct attention. I allude to the

power of the Church to frame and exhibit a human summary of doctrine in the shape of Creeds, or Confessions of Faith, or Catechisms, or subordinate standards of orthodoxy. The right of the Church through the instrumentality of her ministers and pastors authoritatively to publish the truth and preach the Gospel of Christ, few will be found to deny absolutely, although there may be some who may desire unduly to limit the power. Further still, the right of the Church authoritatively to decide between truth and falsehood in the case of religious opinion, to the effect of determining her own profession and the teaching of her ministers, is one conceded by many also within certain restrictions. But the power of the Church to frame and publish a human exhibition of Divine truth in the form of a Confession of Faith, and to make it a standard of orthodoxy, or a term of communion for office-bearers or members, is regarded by not a few as an exercise of power beyond the limits assigned to the authority of the Church, and lying open to very serious difficulties and objections. To the subject, then, of the exercise of Church power in forming, publishing, and enforcing subordinate standards of faith, we shall now advert at some length. What are the grounds on which the lawfulness and use of subordinate standards in the Christian Church may be maintained? Is it competent, or for edification, for the Church to embody in human language its creed or profession, over and above its creed or profession as exhibited in the Scriptures themselves? Is it right, or is it expedient, to add to the Word of God the words of man, as an exhibition or summary of the Church's belief, and as a directory for the Church's practice?

I. It is to be remarked at the outset, that both in the inspired and uninspired history of the Church, in connection with its holding of Divine truth, we see examples of the necessity arising for a re-statement in a new form of words of the faith professed by the Church, in opposition to new forms of unbelief.

In the history of the Christian Church before the canon of Scripture was closed, such a necessity had arisen; and in the history of the Church subsequently to the apostolic age similar emergencies have occurred, necessitating the re-statement in a new form and in new language of the truth formerly held. Within the age of inspiration, and before the last page of the Bible was written, there are at least three remarkable instances that may

be quoted, in which the Church was compelled to re-cast and exhibit in new forms of language the truth formerly held; and compelled to do this because of the perversion to error and heresy of the terms formerly employed to set forth the truth.

1*st*. We find the Apostle John re-casting and re-stating the doctrine of Christ's manifestation in this world; and adapting the form of words in which he re-announces the doctrine to the purpose of meeting the errors which, under the previous terms in which it had been announced, and in spite of them, had crept into the Church. That "Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many," [1] was a doctrine revealed before, and held by the Church as the fundamental article of its faith. But under the shelter of the language in which it had been revealed and professed, there had, even in the apostle's day, "many deceivers entered into the world, who confessed not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." [2] The Docetists did not deny what the entire Scriptures averred: they did not deny that, in one sense of the terms, Christ had been manifested in the world as the Saviour; but in accordance with their own speculative theories, they held that His manifestation was spiritual, and not real—that His coming was not in a real body, but as a spiritual phantasm, thus subverting the essential doctrine of the Incarnation. And John felt and acted on the necessity of re-casting in other language that fundamental article of the Church, and exhibiting it in a new form of words fitted to meet the novel heresy. Both in his Gospel and his Epistles he owned the necessity of re-stating the doctrine in fresh language; and he accordingly declares in the one, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and in the other, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God;" "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." [3]

2*d*. We find the Apostle Paul giving another illustration in his writings of the necessity that may arise within the Church of re-casting revealed truth, and repeating it in new forms of language, to meet and counteract new error. In his second Epistle to Timothy, he speaks of a sect or party "who concern-

[1] Matt. iii. 17, xiv. 33, xvi. 16, xx. 28.
[2] 2 John 7.
[3] John i. 14; 1 John iv. 2, 3.

ing the truth had erred," while yet holding the words in which the truth had been previously revealed. He mentions the case of Hymenæus and Philetus, who maintained that there was a resurrection according to the terms of Scripture, but that it was an allegorical or figurative resurrection, meaning no more than the elevation of the soul above this life, and its rising into holiness; and that in the case of Christians the resurrection spoken of in Scripture "was past already."[1] And accordingly, in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, we find the Apostle re-stating the important article of belief held by the Church as to the resurrection of the body, and laying it down afresh in such terms, and with such elaborate explanations, as directly to meet and repel the error which had arisen regarding it.

3*d*. We find the whole body of the apostles, in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, exhibiting another illustration of the necessity that will oftentimes arise in the history of the Church for re-moulding, not the doctrines of Divine truth, but the form in which those doctrines are expressed; and guarding them from misapprehension or error by additional explanations or new statements in regard to them. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law, was one of those doctrines revealed and professed by the Church from the beginning, as "the article of a standing or falling Church." And yet one of the earliest and most widespread divisions in the Church itself was as to the necessity of circumcision, in addition to faith, in the case of its members. It was in opposition to this error that "the apostles and elders came together to consider of the matter" at Jerusalem, and found it necessary to re-assert the ancient doctrine with such additional explanations, and with such a sentence on the controverted point, as were adapted to the new circumstances which had arisen. In respect to this additional explanation of the Church's doctrine and practice, necessitated by the inroad of error, we are told regarding Paul and his companions, that, "as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem; and so were the Churches established in the faith."[2]

[1] 1 Tim. i. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. Cf. Ellicott *in loc.*, and Gieseler, *Kirchengesch.* Bd. i. § 29.

[2] Acts xv. 1–31, xvi. 4, 5.

Such, within the age of inspiration itself, are the remarkable examples we have of the necessity, growing out of the circumstances of the Church and its members, that arose at different times for re-casting the doctrines of Scripture in a new mould, and exhibiting or explaining it afresh under forms of language and expression more precisely fitted to meet and counteract the error of the times. No doubt it may be said, in answer to this argument, that it was competent for inspired expounders of the truth to re-state the doctrine of the Church, when the terms in which it was revealed at first were perverted or used for the purposes of error, and to re-state it in language equally authoritative and inspired as the original; but that it is not competent for ordinary or uninspired men to do so in language merely human and fallible. I am not at all sure that this answer to the argument is a sufficient one. The need of the Church, after the days of inspiration ceased, to be guarded against the likelihood and danger of heresy and unbelief, was not less, but greater. Perversions of the language of Scripture, in the way of covering error and concealing it, were not likely to diminish, but rather to increase in number, after the apostles were gathered to their rest. There is nothing in the mere fact of the office-bearers of the Church being inspired in those days, sufficient to account for their adoption of this practice of meeting and counteracting the heresies that assailed the Church by distinct and additional explanations or exhibitions of its doctrines suited to the heresies, had that practice in the case of ordinary and uninspired office-bearers of the Church been unlawful or sinful. On the contrary, the presumption seems rather to be, that the example given and the practice begun by the infallible guides of the Church during the apostolic age, was intended both as a suggestion and warrant for their successors, although not infallible, to follow their example and to adopt their practice. The instances recorded in the Word of God of the re-statement and re-exhibition of the doctrines of Scripture in such a form as to meet and counteract new error, seem to be intended to be to future times patterns for imitation, rather than beacons to be avoided. Did we find these re-statements or re-castings of the doctrine formerly held by the Church to go beyond what was formerly revealed on the point, then indeed the new revelation might have been justified or accounted for by the fact of the inspiration of its authors, but

would have been no example for uninspired men. But when we find that the reverse of this is the case, and that such re-statements of the doctrine in new forms suited to the times were strictly declaratory—in the way of explanation, and not in the way of addition to the former revelation—we seem to be justified in saying that this office of the Church in regard to truth was not extraordinary, and peculiar to the age of inspiration, but rather ordinary, and competent to the Church in every age.

That such was the interpretation put upon these examples of the re-statement or re-exhibition of doctrine in new forms of language during apostolic times by the almost unanimous consent of the Church, is made plain by its subsequent history. At almost every crisis in that history, when spreading or predominant error was to be met and counteracted, when unbelief prevailed without, or heresy within, the Church has had recourse to the very expedient adopted by the apostles singly and collectively; and has re-stated its doctrine and re-cast its form of profession, in such language as was suited to meet the evil. When the Arian heresy prevailed so widely towards the beginning of the fourth century, the Council of Nice met and re-asserted those articles of faith respecting the true Godhead of the Son which had been endangered. When, towards the close of the same century, a similar danger threatened the faith of the Church in connection with the Personality and true Godhead of the Spirit, the Council of Constantinople was assembled to renew the testimony of the Church to those vital truths. At the time of the Reformation, when the leading Reformers in Germany found it necessary to separate from the corruptions of Popery, they found it to be no less necessary to embody in a new form, and re-state in fresh terms, the doctrine of the Apostolic Church; and the Confession of Augsburg became the testimony of the Protestant Church of Germany. And to the same feeling of the lawfulness and necessity of re-asserting in fresh terms and a new shape the whole doctrine and testimony of the Church, so as to meet the demands of the times, do we owe the admirable Confession of Christian doctrine which forms the authoritative standard of our own Church.[1]

But passing from those examples furnished, both within and

[1] [Bishop Davenant, *An Exhortation to Brotherly Communion betwixt the Protestant Churches*, London 1641, pp. 34–42.]

beyond the age of inspiration, of a necessity arising in the Church for re-asserting and verbally re-shaping the ancient doctrines of the Church, the lawfulness and necessity of such Creeds and Confessions may be very distinctly proved from the nature and offices of the Church itself. Both in its office towards those within its pale, and in its office to the world without, it is not difficult to recognise the foundation on which the right and duty of the Church may be argued to frame a declaration of its faith, and exhibit a confession of the truth which it believes to be contained in Scripture. For,

II. I remark that, in its office to those within its pale, it is the duty of the Church, as *holding* the truth of Scripture as the basis of its union, by some formal and public declaration of its own faith, to give assurance to its members of the soundness of its profession, and to receive assurance of theirs.

What is the principle of union in any Christian Church which holds the truth of God as the very foundation on which it exists? Plainly and undeniably the mutual and common understanding as to the doctrine of God's Word of those associated together to constitute the Church—their union together in one common profession of the truth. To the very existence of such a union, it is necessary that the mind of the Church be brought out and exhibited to the understanding of all, by a declaration from herself of what she believes, so as to exhibit to the view of her members a profession of the truth which she holds, not merely as the truth which God has revealed, but more especially as the truth which she has made her own by embracing and believing it. Without this, there can be no common understanding between the Church and its members of one another's faith, and consequently no mutual agreement or union as to the holding or profession of it.[1] Now for this end it is not sufficient for the Church

[1] ["Unto the unity of faith among believers," says Owen, "two things are required: *First*, a precise and express profession of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion; for we outwardly hold the Head by a consent unto the form of wholesome words, wherein the doctrine of it is contained. . . . *Secondly*, it is required hereunto, that in other things and duties 'every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,' and walking according to what he hath attained, do follow peace and love with those who are otherwise persuaded than he is; for the unity of faith did never consist in the same precise conceptions of all revealed objects: neither the nature of man nor the means of revelation will allow such a unity to be morally possible."—*Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xv. p. 108.]

to hold up the Bible in its hand as the confession of the truth it believes; or even in language carefully and accurately extracted from the Bible to frame its confession of belief. The Bible was framed to be the declaration of God's mind, and the phraseology employed is exactly and perfectly suited to accomplish the object. The language of Scripture is the best language to express God's mind. But it does not follow from this that it is the best language to express my mind, even although I may mean to express to another man, so that there shall be no misunderstanding between us, the very same truths which God has expressed. With the change in the meaning of language which takes place from age to age,—with the different interpretations actually put upon the terms of Scripture by multitudes,—with the various and even opposite senses which reason, or prejudice, or error has made to be associated with its phraseology; the very words of the Bible may not be the best words to declare my mind and belief to another man, so that betwixt him and me there shall be no equivocation, or reservation, or guile.

Take the case of an individual believer, desiring to join himself to a second believer on the basis of what they jointly believe and confess as Christians. It is not on the basis of the objective truth revealed in the Bible, but on the basis of the subjective belief of that truth, that the union of two such Christians is formed. The communion of two saints is a communion on the footing of the faith they equally have in their heart, and which out of the heart they confess with their mouths. It is not the outward letter revealed in the Scripture, but the inward belief, personal and intelligent and spiritual, of the outward letter that forms the foundation of their union; not the truth understood or not understood, as it stands in the page of the Bible, but that truth translated first into the faith of the heart, and again into the confession of the lips, by both jointly and equally. In the case of the union of two Christians, they come to unite truly and without misunderstanding on either side, not when they repeat by rote, and without caring to know whether they understand each other's meaning or not, the same confession copied from the Bible, and embodied in some oft-repeated textual formula; but when they translate their own subjective belief of God's truths into a personal confession from the lips, and embody their own faith and feelings in their own language. And so it is with the col-

lective society of Christians. The unity of the Church as a society of believers requires and justifies human compilations of Divine truth, if it is to be really a unity of faith, and not merely a unity of form or formal words. The true principle of Church union, upon which the Christian society is associated, demands that the Church shall take not the Bible, nor any extracts from the Bible, to declare its confession of faith, but that it shall take the confession first from its own heart, and then translate it into its own language. In no other way can the Church give a right assurance of its own belief to its own members, or receive a right assurance of theirs. The Church may take the Bible into its hand, and hold it up to the view of the world as the one profession of its faith; but in doing so it is merely exhibiting the mind of God, not declaring its own.[1] In order to declare its own faith, for the purpose of being a basis for union among its members, it must take its own understanding and belief of the truths of God as made known in His Word, and translate them into its own meaning, and into its own language. The Creed or Confession of the Church, if it is to be a right foundation for Church fellowship and association, must be expressed in human terms, as the expression of its own belief, and not merely a formal repetition or echo of the belief of God.

There is a not uninstructive lesson to be learned from the history and the principles of Popery, in reference to the bearing of human Creeds and Confessions on the right basis of Church union. The principle of union in the Popish Church is not a

[1] ["A man may accept as the rule of his faith the same inspired books as yourself, while he rejects every important article of the faith you find in these books. If, therefore, we are to know who believe as we do, and who dissent from our faith, we must state our creed in language explicitly rejecting such interpretations of Scripture as we deem to be false. Papists, Unitarians, Arminians, all profess to find their doctrines in Scripture; but they do not find them in the Westminster Confession. No one calling himself a Christian will deny that 'Christ died for our sins;' but out of these words of Scripture a Socinian will bring a meaning which is utterly subversive of what we hold as essential to salvation. The Church, therefore, gathers her symbol, and utters her Confession, in order that the truth contained in Scripture may be recognised and held in opposition to, or in distinction from, the errors which some have maintained, and which, while they claim to be found in Scripture, are really subversive of the truth therein delivered."—*The Revelation of God in Scripture, viewed in respect both to Theological Science and to the Proper Use of Creeds*, by the Rev. Marcus Dods, p. 191. See the whole of this very able and suggestive lecture in *Lectures for the Times*, Glasgow 1866. Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions*, Lond. 1857, pp. 107–120.]

voluntary and intelligent and personal conviction on the part of its members of the truth which, as a Church, it holds and professes, but rather an implicit faith, with or without understanding, and a formal submission and passive obedience to a system of outward authority. It is not necessary for the Church of Rome, upon its theory of Church union, either to give or receive assurance of an intelligent belief and an active and understanding faith in any system of doctrine. It is enough if its members yield an implicit faith or blind submission to the authority of an infallible Church, and render an outward conformity to its rites and requirements. And hence it is an instructive fact in the history of Popery, that it took no care to exhibit publicly to its members a confession of its faith or summary of its doctrine, until the Reformation compelled it to do so, and very much against its will extorted from it the standards of the Council of Trent. Any system of Church union except the Popish, or any system which proceeds upon the basis of a mutual faith held by the Church and its members, must, in some shape or other, frame and exhibit a confession of faith as the terms of union. The Bible can be no standard of union, because the Bible can be and has been interpreted in many different ways. Human explanations of the Bible, or human confessions of how the Bible is understood by the Church, seem to be necessary to Church union in some shape or other, even where the principle of the lawfulness of such confessions is theoretically denied. In the case of Independent Churches, which disown the lawfulness of human confessions of faith, the declaration of the pastor from the pulpit, and the profession generally or always required from the member on his admission to membership, really form a confession under a different name.

III. In its office to those within its pale, it is the duty of the Church, as the authoritative *teacher* of Divine truth, by some formal and public summary of the doctrines it holds, to give assurance that it teaches what is in accordance with the Word of God.

The principles involved in the union of the Church upon the basis of its belief, as holding the Word of God, seem unavoidably to demand that it shall, by a confession, or creed, or summary of Divine truth, declare what it believes, and what it does not. But the principle involved in the office of the Church as an official

teacher, having its teaching based upon the Word of God, seems no less unavoidably to demand that it shall, by a public declaration of what it believes, give a pledge that its teaching shall be in accordance with that Word. The same argument, indeed, that infers the lawfulness and necessity of confessions from the principles implied in the office of the Church as *holding* the truth, and united upon it, will also evince the lawfulness and expediency of confessions from the principles implied in the office of the Church as *teaching* the truth. Regarded even on the same footing as a voluntary society or a private individual, responsible to none for what it teaches, and with a right to publish what doctrine it pleases, it could not be denied that the Church would have the right, and it might be expedient, to embody for its own use, and for the information of others, in a formal and authentic shape, a declaration of what it professes to teach. But the Church is not only a voluntary or private society; it is a Divine institute: as a teacher of truth it is the servant of another, and His steward to dispense mysteries not its own to His people, and in that character responsible both to Him and to them for what it teaches. And now, seeing that it is not a mere voluntary association or private individual, responsible to none for the doctrine it holds and declares, but rather the delegate of Christ, accountable for that doctrine to Him in the first instance, and to His people in the second,—does that fact, I ask, take away the right which the Church has to frame and exhibit a confession of the truth it teaches, or diminish the expediency of so doing? The answer to that question plainly is, that the circumstance that the Church is of Christ, and responsible both to Him and to its own members as His people, goes incalculably to confirm the right and to augment the expediency. The members of the Church have a right, and that founded on the most sacred grounds, to know how the Church, as the teacher of their souls, is to handle the Word of God, and interpret its truths, and preach its Gospel. No mere general appeal to the Word of God, as the confession of its faith, will satisfy this claim. The question is not whether the Church believes the Bible, but how the Church is to interpret the Bible to its people; in what sense it receives the doctrines of Scripture, and in what sense it is prepared to teach them. It is bound to tell in its own language how, as an interpreter of the Scriptures, it understands their truths; and how, as a preacher of the Gospel,

it believes it. Nothing short of this will suffice to satisfy the rights and claims of its own members. And the very same thing may be argued from the responsibility of the Church, as the teacher of His Word, to Christ Himself. From the individual Christian Christ demands not only that "the heart shall believe unto righteousness," but also that "confession shall be made by the lips unto salvation."[1] Upon the private believer Christ lays the duty of confessing Him with his mouth in the presence of men. And nothing less will Christ receive from the Church. The confession of its belief embodied in its own language, is, on the part of the Church, the answer of the lips vowing unto the Lord.

IV. In its office to those that are without its pale, it is the duty of the Church, as the witness and protest for truth against the error or unbelief of the world, to frame and exhibit a public confession of its faith.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon this, as I have already had occasion to remark on the necessity that has arisen for the Church, at various periods in her history, to re-assert the doctrine once delivered to the saints in fresh terms and with new explanations, as the perversions of the truth or the inroads of heresy might demand. And what has so often been a necessity laid upon the Church, is also its duty. It has an office to discharge even to the unbelieving world without, and to those enemies who have separated themselves from her, because they were not of her. She has the office to discharge of being a witness and a protest for the truth against both. And in no other way can this duty be performed, except by adapting her public profession of the truth to the form and fashion of the error, and closing the bulwarks of the Church with an armed defence at every point where the enemy may threaten to enter. Had the adoption of confessions and creeds not been a duty laid upon the Church by a regard to her own members, it would have been a necessity laid upon the Church by a regard to those not her members, but her enemies. Human standards would have been needed, even if for no other reason than to repel the assaults and inroads of heresy and unbelief; when the very language of Scripture is misused to the utterance of falsehood, and the terms of God's own Word perverted so as to assail therewith God's truth. Had there been no other ground

[1] Rom. x. 10.

for the adoption of human language in expressing the faith of the Church, or for the introduction of human formularies of faith, there would have been ground sufficient in the fact of the existence and prevalence of unscriptural error and heresy couched in Scriptural language. And the very same reason is sufficient to account both for the multiplication of articles not fundamental in human standards, and for the negative and hostile aspect under which truth itself, both fundamental and otherwise, is exhibited. In no other way could the Church discharge her office as a witness and protest against the world, as well as in behalf of Christ, except by making her articles and formulas of belief counterparts to the heresies around her, and drawing out her confession of faith less upon the form and mould of truth, than upon the form and mould of falsehood. As a protest against spiritual evil, they must be fashioned upon the principle of a contradiction of error, rather than the independent assertion of truth. In this way only could the Church discharge her duty towards the world without, confronting the plague, while standing between the living and the dead.

CHAPTER III.

OBJECTIONS TO THE LAWFULNESS AND USE OF SUBORDINATE STANDARDS.

The subject of the exercise of Church power in this particular department is so very important, that it may be well to consider apart, and somewhat in detail, the objections that have been commonly urged against the lawfulness or use of subordinate standards. These objections may be readily reduced to one or other of the two following heads:—First, subordinate standards have been objected against, as setting aside the sole and supreme authority of Scripture as the rule of faith, and as militating against the absolute sufficiency and perfection of the sacred volume. Second, subordinate standards have been objected against, as an assumption of an authority on the part of the Church not belonging to her, and the imposition of an unlawful restriction on the Christian liberty of her members. Most if not all the arguments usually urged against the lawfulness and use of subordinate standards may be classed under one or other of these heads. To the examination of these, therefore, we shall now proceed to direct our attention.

I. The first objection brought against the use and lawfulness of subordinate and human standards of faith is, that they interfere with the sole authority of the Word of God, and proceed upon the principle that that Word is not in itself perfect or sufficient for all the purposes and objects of a Christian Church.

There would be force and justice in this objection, if one or other of these three things were true in regard to subordinate standards of faith: if, in the *first place*, they denied or superseded the sole supremacy of Scripture as the Church's law both for doctrine and practice; or if, in the *second place*, they were inconsistent with the sufficiency of Scripture, as complete for all the purposes designed by it; or if, in the *third place*, they expressly or

by implication added to the Word of God. If any or all of these things were true in regard to subordinate standards of faith, then the objection would be unanswerable; but if it can be satisfactorily shown that none of them is true, the lawfulness and expediency of the Church adopting and employing such standards will remain untouched by such an objection.

1*st*. Do the use and imposition upon its office-bearers or members by the Church of human creeds and confessions deny or set aside the sole supremacy of Scripture as the Church's law both for doctrine and practice?

Now it cannot be denied that it is a possible thing that human articles of faith, and human constitutions for the regulation of the Church's conduct, may be invested with an authority and elevated to a place inconsistent with the sole supremacy of the Word of God. When such articles or constitution are imposed by the authority of the Church as itself irresponsible and supreme in these matters, and when they are enforced as binding apart from the authority of Scripture, and to the exclusion of any appeal to Scripture, then unquestionably they are open to the objection urged, and cannot but be regarded as derogatory to the Scriptures as the ultimate standard of appeal in matters of doctrine and practice. In this light the standards of the Papal Church must be regarded, when they are imposed on the implicit faith and the passive obedience of its members by the authority, supreme and infallible, of that Church, apart from the Word of God; and when in no circumstances is there left open to its members an appeal to the Scriptures as lawful or competent. The Canons and Catechism of the Council of Trent, because of the authority which they claim, and the manner in which they are imposed, are open to the objection now under consideration.[1]

[1] [Concilii Trident. Canones et Decreta, Sess. iv., etc. *Bulla Pii* IV., *super confirmatione œcum. gen. Concil. Trident. Bulla super formâ juramenti.* "According to the fourth rule of the Index concerning prohibited books, prepared by authority of the Council of Trent, and sanctioned by a Bull of Pius IV. in 1564, and by many of his successors down even to the present age, no Papist is allowed to read or have in his possession a copy of the Bible in the vernacular tongue, without a written licence from the bishop or inquisitor. This licence is to be given only to those with regard to whom these authorities, after consulting with their priest or confessor, shall be satisfied that they will derive from the reading of the Bible not injury, but increase of faith and piety; and no one who shall presume to have a Bible in his possession without this written permission can get absolution of his sins till he give up the book to the bishop. Papists, indeed, in modern times and in our

But it is not so in regard to the creeds and confessions adopted by Protestant Churches. Such human exhibitions of Scripture doctrine are not put in the place of the Scriptures, as supreme in their authority or infallible in their statements. The very name by which they are known indicates the position that they occupy, and the right to submission which they assert. They are the *subordinate* standards of the Church, not the supreme. Their authority is inferior, not primary; secondary to the Word of God, and only binding in so far as, and no further than, they are a declaration or exhibition of the meaning of the Word of God. There is an appeal ever open from the subordinate standards to the supreme standard, which is the Word of God; and the authority of creeds and confessions is liable at any time to be tried and judged by their conformity or non-conformity with the Scriptures. With such a reservation of the sole supremacy of the Word of God as the law of the Church's belief and practice, they cannot be justly chargeable with the offence of arrogating that place which is due to Scripture. The Church may fairly and reasonably be entitled to make such human articles of faith the term of communion and the test of orthodoxy, because they embody her own belief of what the Word of God contains, the

own country, have found it impossible to enforce this law; that is, they see that it would probably do more harm to their cause to attempt to exercise such an odious and impious tyranny than to connive at the violation of the rule. But while the Popish authorities do not, in Scotland at least, interfere to prevent their people from reading the Bible, they are greatly puzzled what to make of the fourth rule of the Index. They cannot directly deny its authority; but they sometimes represent it as merely a temporary regulation, which is now unnecessary, and has been therefore cast aside. This is evidently a mere pretence, which has no foundation to rest upon. Pope Pius IV., in his Bull sanctioning the Index and the accompanying rules, prohibits the violation of them under pain 'of mortal sin and severe punishment at the discretion of the bishops;' and it must surely require at least equal authority to secure any who may disobey against these awful consequences. If this regulation was but temporary, when and by what authority was it repealed? It has been sanctioned by many successive Popes. (See two Bulls of Pius VII. in Blair's *Revival of Popery*, let. 20 and 21.) Pope Leo XII., in his Encyclical Letter in 1824, in which he denounced the Protestant Bible as 'the gospel of the devil,' and 'deadly pastures,' enjoined bishops to adhere strictly to the rules of the congregation of the Index, adopting their statement, that 'if the sacred Scriptures be indiscriminately read, more evil than good would arise from it;' and the Popish bishops of Ireland published immediately thereafter a Pastoral Instruction, in which they expressed their concurrence in the Pope's letter, and declared their intention to act upon the injunction of their master."—Cunningham, in notes on Stillingfleet's *Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Rome*, Edinr. 1837, pp. 112, 132-138, 147-149.]

declaration of its meaning and import according to her understanding of it, and no more. Nor can the members and office-bearers justly complain that they are tried by such a subordinate standard, and acquitted or condemned accordingly, and not rather tried by the Word of God; unless they are prepared to put the Church itself on its trial because of the unsoundness of these standards themselves. Proceeding on the joint and equal assent of the Church itself, and of the members of the Church, to its confession or creed, there can be no injustice, but may be obvious convenience, in testing the opinions of one or other by such a standard; nor, while an appeal in the case of difference of opinion as to the orthodoxy of the confession lies to the Scripture in the last resort, can the adoption of such a procedure fairly involve the charge of denying that the Scriptures are the supreme law of the Church's belief and practice.

Upon such principles as these, there is, I think, good ground for asserting that the adoption of subordinate standards by the Church either as a term of communion or a test of orthodoxy, is not liable to the objection of superseding or denying the sole and supreme authority of the Word of God. The Church, as a society necessarily called upon and required to adopt some terms or other of communion, and some test or other of profession, may adopt, in all cases where a member or office-bearer is put on trial as to his right to communion or to office in the society, one or other of two ways of proceeding. The Church may in all such cases take directly the Word of God itself as the standard to rule its decision, or may take a human confession drawn up in explanation of the Word of God as the standard to rule its decision. In both instances it is ultimately the Church's judgment of what the Word of God says in the matter that guides and determines the decision,—that judgment in the one case being formed directly by an examination of the Word at the moment, and in the other case being formed by the help of its own previous examination of the same Word embodied in its confession. In the one way the Church, for the purpose of deciding each particular case, examines the Scriptures afresh, and according to the examination pronounces judgment; in the other way, the Church has recourse for aid to the result of its former examination of the Scriptures, and according to the record of that examination pronounces judgment. In both instances the judgment rests on the

same foundation,—on the footing of what, in the opinion of the Church, is the meaning of the Word of God as bearing on the matter submitted to its decision. The principle involved is the same in the one instance as in the other; the only difference being that, according to the first method, an examination is instituted at the time as to the bearing of Scripture on the point in dispute; whereas, according to the second method, an examination instituted long before as to the bearing of Scripture on the point is held to be conclusive, and to supersede the necessity of repeating it on each recurrence of the dispute again. That the appeal to the Word of God was made before and not at the moment, and embodied in the articles of a confession for future reference and use, can make no fundamental difference in the matter one way or other. And unless, therefore, the Church is to be denied the right to fix its terms of communion, and to decide in accordance with its own judgment as to these, with respect to the title of a member to Church fellowship, or of a minister to Church office, it must have a right to apply its own examination of Scripture, made at the instant, or made no less conscientiously and deliberately long before, and registered in a confession for daily use, to such matters; and neither in the one case nor in the other is the exercise of its right an encroachment upon the authority of Scripture as the supreme law of its faith and practice.

Nor on these principles can it, I think, be denied that the Church may be bound to take into consideration, with a view to their alteration or amendment, the subordinate standards she may have framed or adopted, when an appeal to that effect is made to her from a competent quarter and on sufficient grounds. The man charged with doctrinal error, and brought to the bar to answer for it, whether a private member or a public teacher in the Christian society, is not the competent party to take action in this way, nor does his case afford sufficient occasion for the Church being called upon by him to revise its standards of faith; for his demand in such a case to be tried by Scripture instead of the acknowledged formula of the Church may be, and most frequently is, nothing more than a subterfuge to protect his own error of which he stands accused. A panel answering at the bar to the charge of heresy is not in a position to be entitled to put the Church itself to the bar to answer for its creed. But unquestionably, if the standards of a Church are subordinate and not

supreme, they are not to be reckoned infallible, and not to be accounted unalterably fixed or stereotyped for all generations. "All Synods or Councils," says the Confession of Faith, "since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both."[1] And if the Church shall come to be convinced that its decisions or standards are in any respect in error, it is bound to amend them according to its better understanding of the Word of God.[2] Or if necessity should arise in the history of the Church of adding to its protest against error in consequence of the inroad of new danger to the spiritual interests of its members, it is not only at liberty, but bound, to enlarge its testimony, not in the way of adding to the truth of God, but of adding to the Church expla-

[1] Conf. chap. xxxi. 4. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. ix. 4, 8.]

[2] ["It is pleaded by some," says Gillespie, ". . . that to establish by the law of the land a Confession of Faith . . . is to hold out and shut the door against new light; that as the state and Church have discovered the evil of divers things which were sometime approved and strengthened by the law of the land, so there may afterward be a discovery made by the light of experience and a further search of the Scripture to make manifest the falsehood of those doctrines which are now received as true: for αἱ ὑστεραι φροντιδες σοφωτεραι. . . . First of all, I do not deny, but most willingly yield, yea assert as a most necessary truth, that as our knowledge at its best in this world is imperfect—for we know but in part—so it ought to be our desire and endeavour to grow in the knowledge of the mind of Christ, to seek after more and more light. . . . Secondly, I acknowledge . . . that we may happily come to know the evil of that whereof we knew no evil before, or the good of that in which we knew no good before. Thirdly, I acknowledge that there is ofttimes a great mistake, misunderstanding, error, and unsoundness in the judgment of Christian persons or Churches, so that godly men and true Churches may come to know that to be evil which they sometime thought good, and that to be false which sometime they thought true, or contrariwise; which experience hath taught, and may teach again. Fourthly, I confess it is no shame for an Augustine to write a book of Retractations. It is the duty not only of particular Christians, but of reforming, yea reformed, yea the best reformed Churches, whensoever any error in their doctrine, or any evil in their government or form of worship, shall be demonstrated to them from the Word of God (although it were by one single person, and one perhaps of no great reputation for parts or learning, like Paphnutius among the many learned bishops in the Council of Nice), to take in and not shut out further light, to embrace the will of Christ held forth to them, and to amend what is amiss, being discovered unto them. Fifthly, I also believe that towards the evening of the world there shall be more light, and 'knowledge shall be increased,' and many hid things in Scripture better understood, when the Jews shall be brought home, and the Spirit of grace and illumination more abundantly poured forth. We have great cause to long and pray for the conversion of the Jews; surely we shall be much the better of them."—*Miscell. Quest.* chap. x. *Presbyt. Arm.* vol. ii. p. 53.]

nations of that truth against unbelief. Or even, if there shall be competent reason for such a step, it may become the duty of the Church to alter its standards by simplifying and curtailing them in regard to points not fundamental, when errors formerly prevalent and denounced by the Church shall be prevalent no longer, or circumstances shall have made them less prominent or mischievous. It cannot be denied that nothing but grave and important cause shown is sufficient to warrant a Church to take up her acknowledged or authorized standards with a view to revision or correction; but it were, I think, to give a place and authority to subordinate standards not belonging to them, to deny that such a review is competent, and may in certain circumstances become a duty.[1]

2*d*. Are the adoption and use of subordinate standards to be regarded as inconsistent with the sufficiency and perfection of Scripture for the ends designed by it?

Now, in answer to this question, it must be remembered that the Scriptures were not designed for the same limited purpose as creeds or confessions of faith are designed for; nor are their sufficiency and perfection to be tried by the same restricted criterion by which we would test a human and subordinate standard of Divine truth. The Bible as a revelation from God was intended, among other objects, to serve as a complete and perfect standard of truth in doctrine and practice to men; and for the attainment of this *one* end, a language of such clearness, and fulness, and definiteness of announcement, as should exclude the possibility of mistake, if that were possible, might perhaps have been the best. But we know that the Bible had other ends to serve. It was revealed at first step by step; and it was not intended to be any other than a gradual and partial development of

[1] ["We admit that this (the advisability of shortening and simplifying the terms of ministerial communion) is a fair and reasonable topic for discussion; and we are not aware that, as distinguished from some of the other branches of the controversy about confessions, it has ever yet been subjected to so thorough, deliberate, and comprehensive an investigation as its importance deserves. We have no wish to encourage the raising of a discussion upon this subject; but we see symptoms which seem to indicate, that it is likely to be pressed upon the attention of the Churches, and it may be well that men should be turning their thoughts to it."—CUNNINGHAM, *Works*, vol. i. p. 52; comp. also pp. 156, 410–412, iii. p. 584. *Catech. of the Prin. and Constit. of the Free Church*, Ed. 1863, Q. 44, 45, and note p. 18. Marcus Dods, in *Lectures for the Times*, Glasgow 1866, pp. 192–212.]

truth to the successive ages that received the revelation. To them it was *not* intended to convey in the clearest and most unmistakeable language the truths made known; but, on the contrary, these truths were purposely darkened by figure, and type, and prophecy, and only partially revealed. And even now, after the canon of Scripture has been completed, it is still intended to serve other purposes beyond that of a complete communication of doctrine and truth to men. It is sufficient for this end; and it is perfect for *all* its objects, including this among the rest. But there can be no doubt that, in the manner in which the revelation is made to us, and in the revelation itself, there are other objects contemplated; and among these, that the Bible is intended to be a discipline and trial to faith, and for that purpose is intentionally less clear, and full, and explicit than it might have been. There is enough of light in the Bible for those who love the light; but there is enough of darkness for those that love the darkness better. It is a full, sufficient, and perfect rule of faith and conduct for those who will use it aright; but there are "many things in it hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest unto their own destruction." It is no disparagement to the Scriptures, as perfect for all the ends designed by them, or as complete and sufficient for the one end of a rule of faith and manners, to assert that human summaries or exhibitions of truth may define the truth in a manner less liable to misinterpretation or perversion than the Scriptures themselves have done. The language of Scripture, and the manner in which it makes known the truth, the degree of light given, and the degree of light withheld, are determined at least partly upon the principle, that to the earnest, honest, and anxious inquirer, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God," but to the unbelieving only "in dark sayings and parables." It is not just or reasonable to test the Scriptures by the same test as might be applied to a human explanation or summary of Divine truth. The Scriptures had other ends in view, and other objects were to be attained by them. Had the Bible been intended to answer the one purpose for which confessions, and creeds, and articles of faith are intended, it would have been unlawful and sinful to have added the latter to the former. But human interpretations of Scripture and subordinate standards of faith have not the same end in view as the Bible; and it is no disparagement or

dishonour done to the Bible to employ them to serve a purpose, which the Bible was never intended, or at the best only partially intended, to serve.[1]

Upon the general ground, then, that the Scriptures were not limited in their aim to the end which creeds and confessions were intended to accomplish, but had other and more general purposes in view, we argue that it is no disparagement done to the Bible to employ, in addition to it, subordinate standards as a term of communion and a test of orthodoxy. But although we should restrict our argument to the one purpose—which doubtless, along with others, the Scriptures were intended to serve—of supplying a perpetual and infallible rule of faith and practice, we should be led to adopt the very same conclusion. Granting that the Bible was designed to serve as a perfect and infallible rule of belief and conduct, and limiting our attention for the present to this single object, it must still be borne in mind that it was meant to be a rule not local but universal, not temporary but perpetual, accommodated not to one nation or one age, but to all nations and all ages. The very opposite is the end contemplated in human creeds and confessions. They are designed not to serve a universal purpose, but mainly to meet the exigencies of a particular Church. They are constructed not for perpetual use throughout the whole world, but chiefly for the local and temporary benefit of the special Christian society that avails itself of them to be its witness for the present truth, or its protest against the present error. A very different form and phraseology, then, were needed for truth embodied in Scripture, and for truth embodied in creeds and articles of faith employed as the confession of a particular Church. Such creeds and articles, to serve the special and limited purpose designed by them, must vary as to form and expression with the variation of language from age to age,—with the difference of period, and country, and people,—with the state of opinion, more especially with the forms of unbelief and error prevalent,—with the perversions and disguises put upon the phraseology of Scripture by those who turn it unto error,—with the subterfuges in interpretation and misinterpretation of those who would seek to make the Bible speak not the words of truth, but a lie. Ends such as these the Scripture was not intended to

[1] Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions*, Lond. 1857, pp. 66, 82-86, 107-145. [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 287-293.]

accomplish, viewing it even in its limited office of a rule of faith and practice; and it is no dishonour to the Scriptures, nor is it a denial of their sufficiency and perfection for the ends they were meant to serve, to say that what they were not *intended* they were not *fitted* to secure. The change in the meaning of language from age to age, were there no other cause, would itself unfit the Bible to act the office or sustain the place of a confession of faith, calculated to witness against error and heresy as they arise in the Church. There are numberless words employed in Scripture which, when used now, convey a very different meaning from what they bore in the first century of our era; and phrases which in the mouth of an apostle or an apostolic father of the primitive Church asserted truth, but in the mouth of one employing them in the present day to declare his faith, would assert or imply error. The word ἐπισκοπος or πρεσβυτερος on the lips of the Apostle Paul, or of the Fathers of the first two centuries, had a very different sense from what it has in the mouth of some fond disciple of the hierarchy at the present day; or again, the term ἱερευς or θυσια in the Epistle to the Hebrews means something very different from what it means now in the creed of some "sacrificing priest" of Rome. The Bible could not, from the very nature of the case, be intended to be a protest against the changes and perversions superinduced upon its own language ages after it was written; and it is not inconsistent with the exclusive deference due to the Bible, as sufficient and perfect for all its own purposes, that we employ human confessions of faith to do what it was never intended and is not calculated to do.[1]

3*d*. Are human creeds and confessions chargeable with expressly or by implication adding to the words of Scripture?

Could this charge be substantiated, then indeed subordinate standards must be accounted inconsistent with the sufficiency and supreme authority of Scripture. But that this is not the case, the very slightest consideration will suffice to show. That human creeds and confessions may be framed upon the principle of including articles of faith and rules of conduct not contained directly or indirectly in the Bible, it is impossible to deny;

[1] [For a discussion by the author of the important doctrine of "Scripture consequences," on which all Confessions of Faith so largely depend, see Appendix F.]

for the Church of Rome in her standards has afforded but too plain an exemplification of this. But the creeds of Protestant Churches being simply declaratory of the law of Christ, and nothing more, cannot, in principle at least, lie open to such a charge. In this respect, creeds and subordinate standards must be accounted as standing nearly on the same footing with the ordinance of exposition or interpretation, or preaching the Word of God, exercised by any pastor. The one is no more guilty of adding to the Word of God than the other. They both profess to be a human interpretation by the Church of the mind of God as revealed in His Word. They both claim to be believed because they declare the truth of God, and no further than they declare it. The authoritative declaration of Divine truth delivered from the pulpit is the Church's oral confession of faith. The authoritative declaration of Divine truth embodied in subordinate standards is the Church's written confession of faith. To affirm that the one is inconsistent with the authority of Scripture, because it is virtually the Church adding its own articles of faith to those revealed in Scripture, is an argument that must upon the very same ground apply with equal force to the other. In relation to the Word of God, the ordinance of exposition or preaching on the one hand, and the adoption of human interpretations in the shape of written confessions or creeds on the other, are both declaratory, and no more than declaratory, of the truth revealed in Scripture; and any objection on this score must, in principle, militate as strongly against the one as against the other.

II. So much, then, for the first general objection taken against subordinate standards of faith, as inconsistent with the authority and sole supremacy of the Word of God. The second grand head under which the arguments against subordinate standards may be ranked is, that in one shape or other they are an unlawful imposition upon or restriction of the Christian liberty of the members of the Church. With respect to this objection, taken in its general form, there are two remarks which may be made.

In the first place, if, by the adoption and imposition by its authority of subordinate standards on office-bearers or members, the Church were imposing a new creed and a new rule of conduct not previously obligatory, then indeed the charge of restricting

Christian liberty would be well founded. But if the principles already laid down in regard to this matter be correct,—if subordinate standards, in so far as they embody doctrine, are no more than declaratory of the truths of Scripture, and in so far as they contain a directory for practice, are no more than declaratory of the law of Christ,—then it cannot be alleged that they restrict the liberty of Christians any further than the Word of God has already restricted it. So long as subordinate standards keep strictly within the limits of the Word of God, the liberty of the members of the Church cannot be said to be sacrificed to them. It may be a question indeed, and a question not very easily resolved, how far *short* of the limits of the Word of God it is expedient for subordinate standards to stop in laying down articles of faith, and prescribing regulations as terms of admission to membership or office in the Church, even although these articles and regulations be justified by Scripture. To multiply the number of articles of faith, or of regulations for Church order, and to lay these down minutely and in detail in the creeds and constitutions of the Church, even although all sanctioned by the Word of God, may be an error, as tending not to abridge Christian freedom, but to injure the cause of union among Churches and Church members. The multiplication of Church articles and rules, not fundamental, may on this account be a serious and hurtful error, hostile to the unity of the body of Christ.[1] But if they are acknowledged to be within the limits of the Word of God, they cannot, by any one who so acknowledges them, be accounted without manifest inconsistency as infringements upon his Christian freedom. By his own acknowledgment, an exemption from submission to such doctrines and duties is not part of the freedom which is reserved to him in the Word of God. If indeed the articles of the Church's standards are not justified by Scripture, then on that account, and on that alone, they ought to be expunged from her confession, and are not binding so long as they are retained in it. But if they are sanctioned by the Scriptures, they must be also consistent with Scripture freedom.

But, *in the second place*, so far from subordinate standards being in the very nature of them inconsistent with Christian

[1] Laing, *Historical Notices of the Ecclesiastical Divisions in Scotland*, Edin. 1852, pp. 6–8, 12–16.

liberty, the doctrine that condemns and would forbid them is itself inconsistent with the true liberty of the Church and its members. View the Christian Church in no other or higher light than as a voluntary society, and as a voluntary society it must have the right to fix its own terms of admission whether to membership or to office within it. This right, belonging to the Church in common with any merely voluntary association, is confirmed by the additional consideration, that it is a right guaranteed to it by Christ, in virtue of its being not only or chiefly a voluntary society, but one instituted and governed by Himself. And yet it is this right which is denied to the Christian Church by those who declare that subordinate standards are unlawful and ought to be done away with, whether as a term of communion or a test of orthodoxy.[1] Such a theory virtually denies to the Church of Christ the liberty that is enjoyed by every voluntary society to fix its own terms of fellowship, and to admit to or exclude from membership or office, according as individuals do or do not come up to these terms. Reduce to practice such a theory, and the Church must submit, against its own will and without objection, to receive into its fellowship and among its office-bearers all who claim admission, pretending to hold the Bible as the profession of their faith, but denying, it may be, every one of its fundamental doctrines. Declare subordinate standards to be unlawful, and abolish them in so far as regards their use in defining the Church's membership and testing the character of her office-bearers, and you impose upon the Church the degradation of being compelled to admit all indiscriminately to office and fellowship whose heresies can be contained within a profession of regard to the Scriptures: you rob her of the liberty won for her by Christ, and not denied to the humblest private society, of saying who shall and who shall not have the privilege of enjoying her fellowship and holding her offices. So far from its being true that the use of subordinate standards deprives the Church of her Christian liberty, they are, on the contrary, the shield of her freedom. The theory that proscribes

[1] "Nor will it be without ground if we observe, that all our adversaries in this debate seem to incline to this project, that while all confessions and articles of faith are overturned and contemned, this should nevertheless be established and enforced as an unalterable article of faith, and a constant creed: *That there should be no confessions or tests of orthodoxy.*"—Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions*, Lond. 1857, p. 93.

their use and their lawfulness would, if carried fairly out, subject her liberty and rights to the inroad of all who might have it in their hearts to make her their tool or their slave. Such a theory has never been carried out in practice even by Churches which assert theoretically the unlawfulness of confessions. In one shape or other, and under one name or other, such confessions have always been employed as terms of admission for members and ministers. Without them, indeed, either embodied in a written creed or in an oral statement,—either imposed and enforced by office-bearers or by congregations,—there could be no purity of communion, and no freedom of action for the Church. The rights that belong to the humblest voluntary society would be rights of which the Church of Christ could not boast; and its Christian freedom would be put under the foot of every passer-by. The doctrine that forbids the use of subordinate standards in the Church, carried out to its legitimate result, must throw down all the barriers that protect its Christian fellowship, and leave its territory a defenceless prey to the alien and the foe.[1]

The objections taken to creeds and confessions on the ground we are now considering, when viewed more in detail, and with reference more especially to their bearing against the use of such subordinate standards as tests of membership and office in the Church, resolve themselves generally into the following shapes:

1. There are some men who object to all authorized creeds and articles of faith whatsoever, on the ground that they make the name of Christian and the advantages of Christian fellowship dependent on assent to certain positive truths or dogmas, whether more or fewer. There are some writers in the present day who hold the extreme position, that a man may be fully entitled to call himself a Christian, although he does not believe a single fact or doctrine of Christianity, although he denies the historical existence of the Christ of the Gospels, and the Divine origin of the system which He founded. "To declare any one unworthy of the name of Christian," says Blanco White, "because he does not agree with your *belief*, is to fall into the intolerance of the articled Churches. The moment that the name *Christian* is

[1] Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions*, Lond. 1857, pp. 74–81. *A Defence of the Scripture as the Only Standard of Faith* (in reply to Dunlop's Preface), Lond. 1721, pp. 28–34.

made necessarily to contain in its signification belief in certain historical or metaphysical propositions, that moment *the name itself becomes a creed:* the length of that creed is of little consequence. . . . No man has a right to reject another from the Christian union on account of *any abstract opinion whatever*."[1] "A total disbelief of miracles and prophecy," observes Mr. Hennel in his *Christian Theism*, "no more disqualifies a man for bearing with propriety and consistency the Christian name, than any other deduction from the exuberant belief which places Christ in the Triune Godhead."[2] Upon views such as these it is not needful to dwell.[3]

2. There are other writers who are very far from going to the extremes now referred to, or from denying that the belief of any truth is necessary to salvation, or is implied in the Christian name; but who maintain that we are not at liberty to embody truth in a creed, and to use this as a test of membership or office in the Church, and that when we do this we sin, or at all events act in a way highly inexpedient and injurious to the best interests of Christianity.

Mr. Isaac Taylor, in an article in the *North British Review* upon the works of Dr. Chalmers, announces that it is of the greatest importance to "separate between the truth and the creed," and "to present the truth to the mind of the people apart from the creed," in which it is "entombed." If Dr. Chalmers

[1] Martineau, *Rationale of Religious Inquiry*, Append. p. 108.

[2] Hennel, *Christian Theism*, pp. 2, 14, etc. [Compare M. Renan's views respecting the future of dogma, etc., in the Introduction to *Les Apôtres*, pp. li.–lxii., a passage which furnishes one of the most perfect specimens of style and finish in the whole work.]

[3] ["The Scriptures not only teach that knowledge is an essential constituent of religion, but also that the objective presentation of truth to the mind is absolutely necessary to any genuine religious feeling or affection. It is by the truth, as thus outwardly presented, that the inward state of mind which constitutes religion is produced. We are 'begotten by the truth.' We are 'sanctified by the truth.' It is by the exhibition of the truth that the inward life of the soul is called into being and exercise. This is the agency which the Spirit of God employs in the work of conversion and sanctification. Hence truth is essential to the salvation of men. It is not a matter of indifference what men believe, or in what form right feeling expresses itself. There can be no right feeling but what is due to the apprehension of truth. Hence Christ commissioned His disciples to teach. The Church was made the teacher of the nations; she has ever regarded herself as the witness and guardian of the truth. Heresy she has repudiated, not as an insult to her authority, but as destructive of her life."—Hodge, *Essays and Reviews*, New York 1857, p. 608.]

had rightly understood this, Mr. Taylor considers that, "thence-forward leaving 'rampant infidelity' to run out its own reckless course, he would have given his giant energy to the more hopeful task of ridding his country and its Church of the thraldoms imposed on them in a dark and evil age."[1]

Christianity, we are told in other quarters, "is a life, not a dogma;" and we may and ought to have religion without theology,[2] and Churches without creeds. Such opinions and expressions, in the case of some, undoubtedly spring from an underlying feeling of dislike to all positive Divine truth, more especially when pressed upon them in the shape of distinct and definite statements claiming the submission of the understanding and conscience on the ground of the authority of God. But in the case of very many who use the sort of language referred to, it arises, I believe, from sheer confusion of ideas. The fact that I can say "Credo," I believe this or that truth, does not make the truth the worse, but rather the better, as regards myself; nor does it put me in a worse, but in a better, position with respect to other and new truths to which I may yet hope to attain. And the essential nature of the case is not altered in the least when I put my belief into accurate words, and exhibit it to other men, whether orally or in writing.[3] And what is lawful and expedient for me as a private member of the ecclesiastical society, is at least equally legitimate and fitting for the Church, or the office-bearers of the Church, to do in their collective capacity.

If, indeed, the statement of belief which I make to my friend, in order to ascertain whether we "two can walk together as those that are agreed" on the essential truths of Christianity,—or the statement of belief which the Church makes and asks her office-bearers to subscribe, in order that she may ascertain their sound-

[1] *North Brit. Rev.* No. li. Art. i. pp. 5, 28, etc. *Logic in Theology*, Lond. 1859, pp. 21, 30, 76.

[2] [In fact, as Mr. Froude has informed us, in a recent volume of his *History of England*, although "God gave the gospel, it was the father of lies hat invented theology."]

[3] ["You admit that revealed truths are true, but you dislike their being stated dogmatically. Why? If they are true, why not state them dogmatically. You reply, that in this form they check the independence of thought. Certainly, in a sense it is true that they do check it. But after you have admitted the truth of a position, you are not at liberty to deny it. You cannot wish to do so. You cannot be loyal to known truth, and at the same time ignore or defy her. When you have discovered a fact of experience, you

ness in the faith which she has pledged herself to her members and the world to maintain and expound through them,—be an inaccurate exposition or embodiment of the truth, let that be distinctly alleged and proved. An objection on the ground of discrepancy between the Divine truth and this or that human expression of it, is a competent and, if established, an unanswerable objection. An objection founded on a vague allegation of discrepancy between Divine truth and all positive human expressions of it, is neither a competent nor a sound objection.

3. There is another class of the objectors to confessions of faith as tests of membership and office in the Christian society, whose opposition to them arises not so much from dislike to positive Divine truth, or to distinct and definite statements of it by the Church in general, as from dislike to some particular set of doctrines embodied in the standards of some particular Church. The Arians of the fourth century often opposed the definitions of the Trinity put forth by the Church at Nice and Constantinople, on the general ground of the unlawfulness of imposing any such test of orthodoxy in other than Scriptural words. But the real source of their objection to the term ὁμοούσιος was dislike to the doctrine it so unequivocally conveyed. And in like manner, in our own day, much of the opposition to confessions of faith which takes the form of general objections to all human summaries of Divine truth when employed as terms of private or ministerial communion, really has its root in a distaste for the theology of the Reformation, which is embodied in the authorized standards of all the Reformed Churches of Christendom.

Upon objections which ultimately resolve themselves into a feeling of this nature, it is, of course, needless to dwell here. When manifested in their true shape, they must be dealt with on a different field of discussion, and removed by other arguments

are not at liberty to deny that fact; and you so far forfeit your intellectual independence by your discovery. The dream of an independence of thought which owes allegiance to no fixed truth whatever, is at issue not merely with religion, but with nature herself. An absolutely independent force, whether mental or material, controlled by no restraints and no laws, exists nowhere beneath God's throne. . . . To believe the dogma that God exists, is inconsistent with a liberty to deny His existence; but such liberty is, in the judgment of faith, parallel with denying the existence of the sun or of the atmosphere. To complain of the creed as an interference with liberty, is to imitate the savage, who had to walk across London at night, and who remarked that the lamp-posts were an obstruction to traffic."—H. P. Liddon, *Some Words for God*, Oxf. 1865, pp. 80, 83.]

than those which are relevant and sufficient to establish the lawfulness and expediency of using confessions of faith as tests of membership and office in the Church.

4. Creeds and confessions are objected to by not a few as hindrances to the progress and development of theological science, and as based upon the assumption that all revealed truth can be fully comprehended by any body of uninspired men, and stereotyped for all time in a merely human summary. Now, such objections as these proceed upon a total misapprehension of the true state of the case. We do not say that the statements of the Westminster Confession, for example, comprise the whole truth of God: what we do say is that we believe them to be true—to be a true expression of the revealed mind and will of God, so far as they go. Let any part of them be proved from Scripture to be false, and we give it up; for we hold them only because, and in so far as, they are true. We invite every man to go beyond them if he can. We encourage and call upon every student of God's holy Word to press forward to fresh discoveries of truth, and to open up new views of the meaning of Scripture. "There remaineth yet much land to be possessed." Those who have studied their Bibles longest and most prayerfully are most convinced of that. But here, we believe, in this form of ancient and sound words, is so much of the good land and large already so far explored and taken possession of. Here is so much of truth made good, and rescued from the tumult of error and ignorance, and fenced round with enduring bulwarks which have many a time already turned the battle from our gates. As well might you ask the men of Holland to throw down the dykes that guard their shores from the assault and inroad of the sea, and that were reared at such cost and pains by those that went before them, as call upon us, unless with far more weighty arguments than have ever yet been offered, to yield up the territory won for us by the sanctified learning, the insight, and the prayers of our forefathers.[1]

In bringing to a close our discussion of this important subject, there is one point of considerable practical importance to which I would very briefly advert. The distinction, to which I have already referred, between a confession of faith regarded as a declaration of or testimony to Divine truth, and a confession

[1] Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions*, pp. 146–158.

of faith regarded as a test of membership and office, has not always been sufficiently kept in view in the Reformed Churches. Owing to this especially, the multiplication of articles, true in themselves, but non-fundamental, and of comparatively subordinate importance, has been in some cases unquestionably a practical evil.

It is perfectly clear, for example, that the Westminster Confession is not fitted to be a test of Church membership. Accordingly we do not use it as such, and our Church has never appointed it to be so used.[1] Even as regards some of the office-bearers of the Church, it may fairly be questioned whether it is altogether adapted to be employed as a test of their fitness for office. The general principle to be laid down with respect to this matter seems to be this: *Whatever truths it is necessary for a man to believe in order that he may rightly discharge his duty in the Church, these it is lawful for the Church to embody in a confession and require his subscription to as a condition of office;* and *vice versâ*, *Whatever truths it is not necessary for a man to hold in order to the right discharge of the duties of his office, these it is not lawful to demand his subscription to as a term of office.* What those precise truths may be to which we are warranted in requiring an express personal adhesion in the case of the different ranks of office-bearers, is another, and, it may be, a more difficult question; but of the soundness of the general principle now enunciated, there can, I think, be little doubt. Take the case of deacons, for example. They have not, generally speaking, the theological training necessary to enable them fully to understand the Confession of Faith in all its parts; and if they had, they do not need to understand it all in order to perform efficiently the work of their office in the Church. And so even in the higher office of ruling elder. The amount of truth which an elder requires intelligently to hold in order rightly to do the duty of ruling in the Church, to which he is specially set apart at his ordination, is much less than that which is needed by the minister, who is publicly to teach as well as to exercise government and discipline in the Christian society.

[1] Dunlop, *Uses of Creeds and Confessions*, pp. 192, 193. Laing, *Historical Notices of Eccles. Div. in Scotland*, pp. 17–28, 32–40.

DIVISION II.

CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO ORDINANCES.

SUBDIVISION I.—PROVISION FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN, PERMANENT OBLIGATION, AND LEGITIMATE PARTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

HAVING brought to a close our discussion of the exercise of Church power in reference to doctrine, we pass on to the next department of our subject,—namely, the exercise of Church power with respect to ordinances. The province of the Church in the use and administration of ordinances is an extensive one, and embraces topics of no ordinary interest and importance. The outward provision which God has made for the maintenance of His own worship, the dispensation of ordinances, and the celebration of religious observances in the Christian society—the external apparatus which He has established for the ordinary conveyance of grace to the body of believers from His Spirit, and which is fitted for their spiritual edification and growth in grace—is a most remarkable feature in the character of the Church of Christ. A certain trust has been committed to the Church, and a certain duty is expected from her, in reference to these matters; and it is of much importance to ascertain precisely the nature and extent of her office with respect to them. It has been given to the Church to keep up the public worship of God in the Christian society, according to the method which He Himself has prescribed, to administer those outward means of grace which He makes effectual by His Spirit to the edification of the body of believers, to

order and dispense that external provision for gathering and perfecting the visible society of His people in this world which He has appointed for their present good. A certain measure of power and authority belongs to the Church in its office in connection with these matters. And in entering upon the discussion of the function and authority of the Church in reference to outward ordinances, we shall meet with some of the most interesting as well as difficult questions in this department of theology.

The subject of the administration of Church power with respect to ordinances, may be conveniently distributed into four divisions.

First of all, we have the provision made within the Church, and to be maintained from generation to generation, for keeping up the public worship of God according to the form and method which God Himself has prescribed. Next we have the Divine appointment of a special time for the observance of worship, regulating as it does the question of when and how often Divine service ought to be celebrated as the public act of the Church. After that we have the instrumentality by which, on such occasions, the public services of the Church in its acts of worship are to be carried on, requiring as they do a special order of men to be set apart and qualified for the work. And lastly, we have the positive institutions established in the Christian society in addition to the ordinary weekly public worship of God, and which are designed as special means of grace, in the way of outwardly signifying and inwardly sealing it to the people of God. The Church of Christ has to sustain a certain office in regard to these four different things; and the subject of Church power in connection with ordinances may be conveniently discussed according to the division thus suggested. In other words, the question of the power of the Church in reference to ordinances, upon which we are about to enter, may be argued under these four heads: in reference, *first*, to the ordinance of public worship in general; *second*, to the ordinance of the Sabbath; *third*, to the ordinance of the ministry; and *fourth*, to the ordinance of the Sacraments. These four heads or subdivisions of our subject we shall consider in their order.

Now, in entering upon the consideration of the public worship of God viewed in its general aspect, the first question that meets us is in regard to the standing authority and binding obligation

of such an ordinance. From what source is the duty of public religious worship derived; and is it intended to be a standing and permanent ordinance in the Church of Christ? It is not difficult to find an answer to such a question, or to evince the nature and obligation of the ordinance as part of the public homage of the Church to God.

I. The foundation of the duty of social worship lies in the law of nature itself.

View man individually and apart from other men, and it is the very law of his being, as a creature of God, to love, and honour, and serve his Creator. Praise and outward homage and adoration are the very expression by a dependent creature of the relation in which as a creature he stands to God—the very end for which he was created and exists. Add to the idea of the individual man, taken and regarded as separate and apart from others, the further idea of man as a social being, or man made for and placed in the society of others, and you are at once shut up to the notion of social worship as a duty no less binding upon men collectively, than was the duty of private worship upon men individually. Into whatever relation he enters, man carries with him the same paramount and unchanging law which binds him to honour, and love, and worship his Creator; and every relation of life, capable of being turned to such an end, underlies according to its character the same obligation of doing homage to God. Man in the closet, man in the family, man in the Church, is equally bound to the duties of the personal, the domestic, the public worship of God. Without this, there are many of the powers and faculties of man's nature as a social being, formed as they were for the glory of God, which he cannot bring to do their proper work of glorifying Him. The worship of God, publicly and in society with others, is the proper expression towards God of man's social nature. The very law and light of nature tell us that the public worship of God is a standing and permanent ordinance for the whole human race.

II. The institution of the ordinance of public worship as a standing and permanent ordinance for man, is demonstrated by the Divine appointment in regard to it.

In what manner man as the creature of God is to hold intercourse with Him for the purpose of worship; in what form or by what methods he is to express his natural duty of honouring

and adoring his Maker; by what positive institutions, or in what appointed way, he is to draw near in religious service to God,—all this has not been left to the wisdom or invention of men to regulate, but has been determined and ruled by God Himself. The public worship of one God and Father of all, forms indeed one of the duties of natural religion; but in addition to this, it has been made one of the positive appointments of revealed religion, and the manner of it has been expressly enjoined. From the very beginning there has been a visible society of men united together upon the principle of "calling upon the name of the Lord"[1] in social union, and separated from other men by the profession which characterizes them as His people. In other words, there has been a Church on earth under every dispensation since the first; the members of which have been distinguished from the rest of the world by the faith which they held in common, and by uniting together in public acts of worship as expressive of that faith. The avowal of their belief in the face of men, and their association in a Church state for the purposes of public religious worship, were not matters of mere opinion on their part, nor matters resulting solely from the obligations of natural religion. They associated themselves together in this way by the express institution of God, in accordance with the promise that Christ should have a seed to serve Him, and a Church throughout all ages.[2] It was a Church union constituted upon the authority of God, and regulated by His positive institutions; and Church worship as a revealed ordinance was grafted upon the duty as previously recognised in the character of an ordinance of nature.

There is a duty of nature, which lays upon man the obligation of social worship; there is a duty of grace to the same effect, over and above the duty of nature. And not only so. But the manner of social worship, in addition to the duty, has been expressly appointed by God. There has never been wanting in any age since the first a Divine directory for the form and method of worship, suited to man's circumstances as a sinner, and regulating the manner of his approach in religious acts to God. There have been at all times positive observances and institutions of worship added to what was enjoined or required by the law of nature.

[1] Gen. iv. 26.
[2] Gen. xvii. 7; Ps. xxii. 30; Isa. liii. 10

This addition of positive institutions of worship, and the express regulation of the manner of it, were more especially necessitated by man's fall. After the fatal separation between man and God occasioned by that event, it remained for God, and for Him alone, to say whether He would ever again permit the approach of man to Him in the way of worship; and if so, it remained for God, and for Him alone, to prescribe the terms and to regulate the manner of the approach. In regard to such a matter as either the conditions or the way of a sinner's approach to God in accepted worship, it was for the sinner not to devise his own method, but to receive submissively God's method. And hence not only the duty of Church worship, but the express manner of it, have been dictated by God in every age; and the way in which a sinner might worship Him acceptably, has been prescribed and regulated by positive Divine institution. There are the arbitrary rules and observances of a Church state enjoined according to a Divine directory for worship, in addition to what the religion of nature might dictate.

These institutions of public worship of a positive kind have varied from age to age under the different dispensations of God. There were the rite of sacrifice and the original promise, that formed the public worship and the Bible of men immediately after the fall. There were, in addition to these, the rite of circumcision and the covenant with his special seed, that formed the directory for worship and the revelation given to Abraham and his successors in the patriarchal time. There were the passover and the giving of the law, the institutions of Moses, the temple service, and the prophecies, that formed the appointed worship and oracles of the Jewish Church. And under the New Testament dispensation, although, compared with what went before, it is a spiritual one, God still regulates the manner as well as enjoins the duty of Church worship. In short, in no one age since the first have sinners been left to their own devices or option in regard either to the duty or to the manner of social worship. Nor could it be so. The sinner may not dare to approach to God, even for the purpose of worshipping Him, except according to the express manner which God has laid down. Public worship is one of the acts of the Church; and every part of the tabernacle is to be made according to the model given on the mount. It is a standing and perpetual ordinance of God,

originating in and regulated by express and positive appointment by God.[1]

III. What are the essential parts of public worship as a perpetual and standing ordinance of God in the Church?

Let the Confession of Faith, in the propositions it lays down in regard to religious worship, furnish an answer to that question. "Prayer with thanksgiving," says the Westminster Confession, "being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men." And again: "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the Sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God."[2] These four things, then—prayer, the reading and preaching of the Word, singing of psalms, and the dispensation of Sacraments—make up the ordinary public worship of God, as designed to be a standing ordinance in the Church, and to be kept up uninterruptedly from one generation to another. All of these are revealed institutions appointed by God in His Word; and some of them are also duties of natural religion. *First*, there is prayer, forming part of the ordinary duty of the Church in its acts of public worship. The essential idea of prayer is the necessary and natural expression of the wants of a dependent creature to God,—the utterance of its need with a voice lifted up to Him who alone can satisfy and supply it. In this aspect of it, prayer is the dictate of natural religion. But as part of the public worship of the Church, it is more than this. Prayer, as offered to God through the special channel of a Mediator, and in the name of Christ, is one of those positive institutions added to the duties of natural religion in that worship. The essence of it is common to natural and revealed religion; but the particular manner of it, as presented only through a Saviour, is a positive addition in Church worship to the necessary dictates of the law of nature. *Second*, there is the reading and preaching of the Word, as constituting part of the ordinary public worship of God. Here, too, there is something that is natural, and something also that is added as of positive appointment. In so far as this part of

[1] [Rutherford, *Divine Right of Church Governm.*, Lond. 1646, pp. 28–100.]
[2] Conf. chap. xxi. 3, 5.

worship can be regarded simply as the communication to the worshippers of the knowledge of God's character, it may perhaps be reckoned a dictate of natural religion. But there is far more than this in it. It is a positive institution of worship, added expressly by God in revelation, in so far as it must be regarded as the communication, by the reading or preaching of the Gospel, of the knowledge of God in that special character in which He has revealed Himself to sinners as reconciled in Christ. In this respect the public reading or preaching of the Word is an addition of an arbitrary or positive institution of worship, over and above what was dictated by the law of nature. *Third*, there is the praise of God by "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," forming also a part of the ordinary public worship in the Church. In this also there is something which is the dictate of nature, and something which is the result of institution. Praise is the natural and necessary utterance towards God of the gratitude or adoration of a creature for blessings enjoyed, or because of Divine glory exhibited and seen. But in so far as it is the expression of wonder, admiration, and thanksgiving, for the grace of redemption, and because of the glory of God as the Redeemer, it is a positive institution superinduced upon the dictate of natural religion. This is the chief and principal character under which it enters as an essential element into the worship of the Church; and it is therefore principally to be regarded as a positive institution of Church worship. *Fourth* and last, there is the celebration of the Sacraments—those outward institutions which signify and seal Divine grace to the souls of Christ's people. In their entire character and under all their aspects they are positive institutions, expressly appointed for the Church by its Divine Head, and as such, altogether distinct from the worship of natural religion. In all those parts or elements which enter into the duty of public worship there is more or less of positive and arbitrary appointment, originating in the express injunction of God, and dictated by Him as the way and manner for the approach of sinners to Himself. The duty, and the form in which the duty is to be discharged, are both enjoined by Divine command; and as the standing and perpetual ordinance of Christ in His house, the Church is only safe and in the right discharge of its office when it administers the ordinance in His name, and in strict conformity with His regulations.

IV. All the parts of the public worship of the Church are

characterized by this peculiarity, that as means of grace they either cannot be enjoyed and used at all by Christians individually, or not enjoyed and used to the same gracious effect.

All the elements of worship to which we have referred are parts of a public ordinance, and not of a private one. They belong to the body of believers collectively, and not individually. They are to be enjoyed as means of grace, not by Christians separately, but by Christians in their Church state, and in communion with one another. No doubt, with respect to some of them, they may be used by individuals apart and alone, and without respect to their being participated in by others. There is private prayer as well as public prayer. There may be solitary praise addressed to God from the closet, as well as jointly from the great congregation in the sanctuary. There are such things as private Communion and private Baptism, distinct from the public celebration of those ordinances. But even in respect to those parts of public and social worship which may be used—or misused—in private, and by individuals apart from the society of believers, it is still true that they do not carry with them the same blessing in private as in their public use. They belong, in their character as parts of public worship, to the Church as a body, and not to the individual members of the Church as apart from the rest; and even where the individual use of these ordinances is not impossible or unlawful, but the reverse, they are not used to the same gracious effect, nor have they the same gracious influence, as in the case of the social and joint employment of them.

Prayer is an ordinance of a private kind, as well as of a public; but there is a promise of a more abundant answer and a more effectual blessing when "two or three shall agree together to ask anything of God," than when they ask apart. The reading of the Word, too, is an ordinance meant for the closet as well as for the sanctuary; but in the former case there is no such special and effectual promise as that which declares in regard to the latter, that "where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, there He will be in the midst of them." The ordinance of Communion, as its very name imports, is a social and public ordinance, and not the reverse; and the disciple of Christ has a peculiar right to look for grace in company with the other disciples, when they meet together at their Master's Table, which those have not who unlawfully and presumptuously change

the public into a private ordinance, and partake of private Communions. In short, the blessing upon ordinances is but half a blessing when enjoyed alone, even in those cases when the ordinance may be used by the Christian apart from others; while there is no blessing at all promised to the unlawful use of public ordinances in a private manner, in the case where they admit of no such private appropriation. Either they cannot be enjoyed at all in their character of means of grace, except socially, or else they cannot be enjoyed to the same gracious effect. All the parts of Church worship belong in a peculiar and emphatic sense to the Church, and they are made effectual by the presence and Spirit of Christ, as His instruments for building up and strengthening the collective body of believers in a manner and to an extent unknown in the case of private and solitary worship. The outward provision which Christ has made for social Christianity, as embodied and realized in the communion of the Church, is richer in grace and more abundant in blessing by far than the provision made for individual Christianity, as embodied and realized in separate believers. The positive institutions of Church worship, designed for Christians associated in a Church state, carry with them a virtue unknown in the case of Christians individually.

Such are the grounds on which it may be satisfactorily shown that the ordinance of public worship—embracing as it does the positive institutions of prayer and praise, the ministry of the Word, and Sacraments—is an ordinance of Divine appointment, designed and fitted to be perpetual in the Church. I speak of it at present in its most general character, postponing in the meantime the more detailed consideration of the various institutions included under it, and the more specific proof that they are of standing and permanent obligation in the Christian society. Without entering on the question at present either of the nature or the continued authority of the positive rites connected with the public worship of the Church, it is sufficient to say that the ordinance of public worship in general, and in one form or other, is one belonging of necessity to a Church state, and is part of that outward provision which Christ has established for the edification of His members, and which He designed to be a standing and perpetual appointment in His Church.[1]

[1] [Owen, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xv. pp. 228-234, 248–256, 325–334. Bradshaw, *Several Treatises of Worship and Ceremonies*, Lond. 1600, pp. 1–16.]

Now these principles—which, as thus generally laid down, seem to be fairly warranted by Scripture—are diametrically opposed to the Church system, or rather the no-Church system, of those who, like the Quakers, set aside all the positive institutions of Christianity, and deny that Christ has appointed any outward provision of ordinances in His Church. The fundamental principle of all such theories is, that the inward light or provision of grace bestowed upon the individual, supersedes the use or necessity of any outward provision of ordinances in the Church; that the Spirit of God given to each personally supplies the want of external institutions and positive rites; and that the latter have been done away with under the present economy as the last and highest of the dispensations of God, and have become unnecessary, since the ministration of the Spirit has supplanted every other, and especially every outward ministry in the Christian society. Hence outward and positive ordinances—a form of public worship and religious service; stated times for social prayer or preaching; a standing ministry, and an official teaching of the Word of God; Sacraments and external institutions of whatever kind—are thought inconsistent with the true character of a Christian Church, an intrusion upon the office and work of the Spirit, and in opposition to the nature and design of His dispensation.[1] Such are the principles, more or less modified, held by those who, under the plea of a certain spirituality and a superior attainment as to religious standing, seek to do away with Gospel ordinances and an outward provision for the edification of the Church in general, and more especially with the institution of public worship as a standing and permanent institution in the Christian society. These principles, in their application to the permanence and standing obligation of particular ordinances, may fall to be dealt with again, and in detail, when the subsequent course of our argument brings us to consider these ordinances separately. In the meantime, it is only necessary briefly and in general terms to announce those Scriptural positions which may serve to exhibit the fallacy of such a system.

1*st*. The absence of any declaration in the Word of God, express or implied, that it was the intention of Christ to abolish the positive institutions and outward provision established in

[1] Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, 10th ed. Lond. 1841, pp. 3, 8–10, etc.

connection with the New Testament Church, is itself an evidence that they were designed to be standing and perpetual ordinances in the Christian society. It cannot be denied — indeed, it is granted on all hands, as well by those who disown as by those who assert the permanence of positive rites and an outward provision of ordinances in the Church—that there were such institutions established by Christ, and observed in obedience to His appointment by His disciples at the first. And it cannot be shown, from any statements of Scripture, or any reasonable inference from its statements, that it was Christ's intention that such outward ordinances, once appointed, should afterwards cease; or that there was a time coming when they were to be abolished as no longer of authority or for edification in the Church. It cannot be shown that their efficacy and power for the edification of the Church was to diminish, and at last to vanish away. It cannot be shown that the promise of Christ to communicate of His Spirit through ordinances, was at any time to cease to be fulfilled. It cannot be shown that any higher and more gracious dispensation than that of the Gospel Church was foretold as about to come and supersede the present Church state. It cannot be shown that the Church, as constituted by Christ at His resurrection, with its outward provision of ordinances, is not the last and the best dispensation this world is to enjoy. In short, the absence of any intimation in the Word of God, either expressed or implied, that the present Church state was to be abolished and to give place to another, sufficiently demonstrates that its primitive provision of outward ordinances was designed to be a permanent and standing institution in the world.

2*d*. The outward provision of ordinance in the Church forms part of the administration of Christ's visible kingdom in this world, and as such is destined to be permanent and perpetual. The statements of Scripture abundantly prove that Christ possesses not only an invisible, but also a visible, kingdom of His own; and that the promise of perpetuity for His crown includes under it the permanence of both. The visible Church is Christ's kingdom; and the administration of government, ordinance, and discipline within it, is but part of that administration by which He rules over His people. That kingdom may at different times be more or less manifest to the outward eye, and more or less conspicuous in the view of men. But He has left us a promise that

the powers of evil shall never finally prevail against it or sweep it entirely away; and as belonging essentially to the due administration of that kingdom, and forming a part of it, the outward dispensation of ordinances and worship in the Church shall never fail.

3d. The use and design of ordinances in the Church seem sufficiently to indicate that they are destined to be permanent. There is no promise of any future age when their office would be unnecessary, and might cease. The ordinances of the former economy were done away with when a higher was introduced, because their end was served, and their object accomplished. They gave place to others when their work was done. But the end for which the ordinances of the Christian Church have been established will not be completely accomplished until the hour of the consummation of all things. The apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians expressly declares, that the gifts of outward administration given to the Church are designed to be subservient to the final advancement of the saints "to the unity of the faith, and the full knowledge of the Son of God."[1] And until that final perfecting of the Church state be completed at the last day, we have his warrant to believe that its ordinances shall remain and be administered.

4th. There are express announcements in Scripture, warranting us to assert that the various institutions and rites that make up the outward provision of government, worship, ordinance, and discipline in the Church of Christ, shall be continued to the end of the world. There are promises, or precepts, or statements in Scripture connected with each of them, in such a manner as to demonstrate that they are permanent appointments, and not intended to pass away. I do not enter into detail in illustration of this proposition at present, when handling the subject of public worship in general, because I may have occasion to do so when I come to treat of the particular ordinances of the Church separately. It is enough meanwhile to assert the general proposition, that there are express testimonies in the Word of God to the fact that the positive institutions and outward ordinances of the

[1] "He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; with a view to the perfecting of the saints, in order to the work of ministration, in order to the edification of the body of Christ, until the whole of us arrive at the unity of the faith and of the perfect knowledge of the Son of God, at full-grown manhood, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—Eph. iv. 11–13.

Christian society were each and all designed to be permanent, and not to be superseded or done away.

So much, then, for the permanent authority and standing character of Church ordinances in general, and Church worship in particular, in opposition to those whose principles would supersede or deny their perpetual obligation. The present Church state of the Christian society is not to be modified into something more spiritual, or to give place to any other, until the Church itself is transplanted into glory. Dwelling on the earth, and conversant with the creatures of the earth, the Church has its outward ordinances and visible signs as well as its inward and spiritual ministrations. Through the channel of these outward and positive ordinances the Spirit of God is poured, in the full tide of His Divine and gracious influences, upon the hearts of His people, — a double power, as it were, embracing both the spiritual and the sensible, so as to work mightily for the renewal and sanctification both of body and spirit in man. The Spirit of God conveyed through the outward ordinances of the Church is the fitting counterpart adapted to the soul enshrined, as it at present is, in the flesh. It is both a spiritual and an outward influence, appropriate and fitted to the combination of the spiritual and the outward in man. And the twofold and joint influence of the Spirit and the fleshly ordinance shall continue to work for the perfecting of the Church, until that hour when outward ordinances shall be done away because they are no longer needed, —when the soul, through the marvellous process of the resurrection, shall come to be joined, not to a natural or fleshly body, but to a spiritual one.

CHAPTER II.

RITES AND CEREMONIES IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.

We have already considered the grounds on which we are prepared to argue that Public Worship—including as the proper and essential elements of it, prayer, preaching, praise, and Sacraments — is an ordinance of God fitted and intended to be permanent and perpetual in the Church. It is our duty now, in prosecution of the subject, to consider the office or function of the Church in connection with this ordinance, and the authority or power which it is given to her to administer in the matter. There is one question more especially opened up by such a consideration, which is of more than ordinary interest and importance in the department of ecclesiastical theology. I mean the precise office or power of the Church in reference to ritual and ceremonial observance in connection with the public worship of God. The public religious worship of God is the dictate, as we have already seen, of natural religion—an ordinance for man binding and permanent even according to the law of nature. But viewed simply in this light, there is a considerably wide and unfettered choice allowed as to the manner in which men shall worship; natural religion not limiting or restricting to any great extent the liberty of men to worship God after the fashion they judge best, and not indicating very distinctly the precise form in which they shall do so. The social worship of God demanded by nature has not been very strictly regulated as to the manner of it by nature; and were there no other authority than the light of reason in this matter, it could not be said that men were strictly shut up to any precise or unvarying method of it, or forbidden to adopt their own. But viewing the ordinance of public worship in another and higher light, regarding it as an appointment not of nature, but of revelation, looking at it as an institute founded upon the express command of God in His

Word, the question arises: Is the same latitude as to the form and manner of it permitted as natural religion allowed, or are the worshippers tied up from exercising their own discretion and liberty of choice in the matter? In other words, taking public worship as a positive appointment of God in Scripture, enjoined on the Church as one of its standing and perpetual ordinances, has the manner in which the duty is to be performed been enjoined in the Bible, as well as the duty itself? or has it been left open to the Church to use its own discretion in selecting, and its own authority in enforcing, a form and method of its own?

Of course there may be very different views adopted with respect to this power of the Church in regulating and determining for itself the form and service of public worship. It may be held that there are in Scripture express precepts, or particular binding examples, or general principles no less binding, sufficient to make up a proper directory for the manner of conducting public worship, leaving to the Church no liberty or office in the matter but to carry into effect the provisions so enjoined upon it. Or it may be held that there is nothing in Scripture so definite and precise as to form a rule at all, and that the manner of public worship is a matter wholly and exclusively within the proper jurisdiction of the Church. Or it may be held, that while some specific institutions are appointed in Scripture in connection with public worship, yet very much of what is positive in regard to it is left for the Church by its own authority to regulate and enforce. And it comes to be a question of no small interest and moment to ascertain the true Scriptural principles which ought to rule in this matter, and to bring these fairly to bear upon the theories now referred to. What, then, is the office of the Church in the way of authoritatively regulating or prescribing the manner or services of public worship? We take it for granted that it is an ordinance designed to be permanent and of perpetual obligation in the Church. What is the extent and what are the limits of Church power in regard to it?

There can be no mistake as to the doctrine held and inculcated by the authorized standards of our Church with respect to the exercise of Church power about the public worship of God. In the twentieth chapter of the Westminster Confession, under the head of "Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience," the power of the Church not only in regard to matters of faith, but

also in regard to matters of worship, is expressly excluded as not binding on the conscience, in anything beyond the limits of what is laid down in Scripture. "God alone," says the Confession of Faith, "is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, *or beside it*, in matters of faith *and worship*: so that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also."[1] The direct object of the Confession in this passage is no doubt to assert the right and extent of liberty of conscience; but along with that, it very distinctly enunciates the doctrine, that neither in regard to faith nor in regard to worship has the Church any authority beside or beyond what is laid down in the Bible; and that it has no right to decree and enforce new observances or institutions in the department of Scriptural worship, any more than to teach and inculcate new truths in the department of Scriptural faith. In entire accordance with this statement of the Confession, is the doctrine announced in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In the Larger Catechism, the answer to the question, "What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?" tells us that "the sins forbidden in the second commandment are all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and in anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God Himself;" . . . "all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever."[2] In answer to a similar question, the Shorter Catechism declares that "the second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, *or any other way not appointed in His Word*."[3] The doctrine, then, in regard to the exercise of Church power in the worship of God held by our standards is sufficiently distinct. The Church has no authority in regulating the manner, appointing the form, or dictating the observances of worship, beside or beyond what the Scripture declares on these points,—the Bible containing the

[1] Conf. chap. xx. 2.
[2] Larger Catechism, Q. 109.
[3] Shorter Catechism, Q. 51.

only directory for determining these matters, and the Church having no discretion to add to or alter what is there fixed.

The Church of Rome holds a doctrine in regard to the extent and limits of Church power in connection with the worship of God the very opposite of this. It assigns to ecclesiastical authority a right to regulate and enjoin to an unlimited extent the manner and the ordinances of Church worship,—making what additions it deems fit to the institutions, the observances, the rules enjoined upon the worshippers, without regard to the intimations of Scripture on the subject. Pretending as it does to be in possession of an unwritten word to supply the deficiencies of the written, and of an infallible authority to bind the conscience, it is in perfect harmony with its other claims that the Church of Rome arrogates a right upon its own authority to add to, and alter, and take from the ordinances and manner of worship appointed in Scripture. In virtue of this claim to dictate in religious worship, it has enjoined under pain of mortal sin numberless institutions and observances, not only unknown to the Word of God, but expressly forbidden there, adding to the service of the true God the worship of images; multiplying by means of alien inventions the number of Sacraments; superinducing upon the time of Divine worship appointed by God a host of fasts and holidays, pretending to equal authority; supplementing the discipline of the Church of Christ by penances, confession, pilgrimages; and corrupting the simplicity of Gospel ordinances by numberless frivolous or superstitious observances enforced as equally binding on the conscience. According to the theory of the Papacy, instead of the Church having no authority in public worship except to administer what the Scripture has already enacted, it has unlimited authority to multiply, alter, and repeal the regulations of Scripture on the subject.[1]

There is a third theory upon this point, intermediate between the doctrine laid down in the Westminster Confession, and the doctrine embodied in the pretensions of the Church of Rome. This third theory is held by the Church of England. It differs from the views of the Westminster standards, inasmuch as it ascribes to the Church the power to enact rites and observances in the public worship of God. But it differs also from the prac-

[1] [Amesius, *Bellarm. Enerv.* Amst. 1658, tom. iii. lib. i. cap. 8. Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom i. lib. ii. Tract. i. cap. iv.]

tice of the Church of Rome, inasmuch as it professedly limits and restricts the power of ordaining ceremonies to those matters which are not forbidden in the Word of God. There is a curious and somewhat obscure question in regard to the authenticity of the twentieth Article of the Church of England, which declares the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies in the worship of God. Bishop Burnet tells us, that the words asserting such a right are not found in the original of the Articles signed by both Houses of Convocation now extant.[1] And from this circumstance as well as some others, a suspicion is entertained by some that they were surreptitiously introduced, and were not agreed to by the Convocation of the Church.[2] But whatever truth there may be in this suspicion, the twentieth Article as it now reads must be held to be the authoritative declaration of the mind of the Church of England regarding the point before us. It is to this effect: "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith. And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's word written." There is a marked and obvious difference between this statement and the declaration of our Church's standards on the same subject. The doctrine of the Church of England is, that whatsoever is not forbidden expressly by the Word of God,

[1] Burnet, *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Oxf. 1845, pp. 11, 14, 17, 223.

[2] [Hardwick, *History of the Articles*, 2d ed. Cambridge 1859, pp. 141–147. After a careful summary of the evidence, in which he gives a list of the early manuscript and printed copies of the Articles in which the disputed clause does not appear, and then of those in which it does, Archdeacon Hardwick's conclusion is, that it could not possibly have been foisted into the Article "in defiance both of civil and ecclesiastical authority. It may possibly have issued from the Synod (*i.e.* the Convocation of 1563) at a later stage of their proceedings, and before the Articles had been submitted to the Queen; or else, which is more likely, it might afterwards have been interpolated while the document was in the hands of the Royal Council" (p. 146). Several other writers of the English Church who have discussed this point—as, for instance, Dr. Lamb in his *Historical Account of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Cambridge 1829—have still more openly avowed their conviction that the clause never obtained the approval of the bishops, but was inserted by Queen Elizabeth, either with her own hand, as some maintain, or through her Council, and that with the express design of exalting her own prerogative as head of the Church of England, and making herself more completely the directress as well as the guardian of her people's faith. Compare Dr. M'Crie's note on the "Sentiments of the English Reformers respecting the Government and Worship of the Church," *Life of Knox*, 5th ed. Edin. 1831, vol. i. pp. 400–405. Archbishop Wake, *Authority of Christian Princes*, Lond. 1697, pp. 131, 136, etc. Append. vii. Strype, *Annals*, ed. 1723, vol. i. p. 335, etc., vol. ii. pp. 63–67. Neal, *Hist. of the Puritans*, Lond. 1723, vol. i. p. 267 f., vol. ii. p. 83, etc.]

it is lawful for the Church to enact by her own authority; the only restriction upon that authority being, that what it declares or enjoins in the worship of God shall not be contradictory to Scripture. Within the limitation thus laid upon the exercise of Church power in matters of worship, there remains a very wide field indeed open to the Church, in which it is competent to add to the ordinances and institutions of religious service. The doctrine of the Westminster standards and of our Church is, that whatsoever is not expressly appointed in the Word, or appointed by necessary inference from the Word, it is not lawful for the Church in the exercise of its own authority to enjoin; the restriction upon that authority being, that it shall announce and enforce nothing in the public worship of God, except what God Himself has in explicit terms or by implication instituted. Under the limitation thus laid upon the exercise of Church power in matters of worship, there is no discretion or latitude left to the Church, except to administer and carry into effect the appointments of Scripture. In the case of the Church of England, its doctrine in regard to Church power in the worship of God is, that it has a right to decree everything, except what is forbidden in the Word of God. In the case of our own Church, its doctrine in reference to Church power in the worship of God is, that it has a right to decree nothing, except what expressly or by implication is enjoined by the Word of God.

Now, keeping in view the various doctrines entertained by different Churches in reference to this matter, let us proceed to inquire into the important principles that determine the place and function of Church power in connection with the public worship of God. The further question of the limits of Church power in this department, as excluding the right to add to or alter the positive institutions of Divine worship, and making it incompetent for the Church to decree rites and ceremonies, will be discussed afterwards.

SECTION I.—EXTENT OF CHURCH POWER WITH RESPECT TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

I. The fundamental principle that lies at the basis of the whole argument is this, that in regard to the ordinance of public worship it is the province of God, and not the province of man, to determine both the terms and the manner of such worship.

The sinner has no right to dictate, but must submissively learn from God both the conditions and the manner in which God will permit his approach for the purpose even of worshipping Him. The path of approach to God was shut and barred in consequence of man's sin: it was impossible for man himself to renew the intercourse which had been so solemnly closed by the judicial sentence which excluded him from the presence and favour of his God. Could that path ever again be opened up, and the communion of God with man and of man with God ever again be renewed? This was a question for God alone to determine. If it could, on what terms was the renewal of intercourse to take place, and in what manner was the fellowship of the creature with his Creator again to be maintained? This, too, was a question no less than the former for God alone to resolve. The sinner could not, from the very nature of the case, presume to dictate to God either the conditions on which his intercourse with God ought to be once more allowed, or the manner in which it might rightly and properly be continued. These were questions which could only be determined by a regard to the principles of God's moral government, and which none but God was competent to decide. Public worship is no other than the manner and the way in which sinners, associated together in a Church state, are permitted in their collective capacity to hold intercourse with God, to maintain in a right and befitting way their fellowship with Him, and to approach Him day by day in acceptable communion. The manner of such intercourse, as well as the conditions on which it was possible to renew it at all, is a matter in regard to which it was the province of God, and not of man, to dictate.[1]

Perhaps a more free and unfettered intercourse with God, without need of positive regulations to define the terms of it, and positive appointments to prescribe the manner of it, might have

[1] ["If we maintain the glory of God, let us speak in His own language, or be for ever silent. That is glorious in Him which He ascribes unto Himself. Our inventions, though never so splendid in our own eyes, are unto Him an abomination, a striving to pull Him down from His eternal excellency, to make Him altogether like unto us. . . . God's prescription hath been at the bottom of His acceptance of any duty ever since He had a creature to worship Him. So Socrates tells us in Plato (*De Legibus*, lib. viii.), that every God will be worshipped τῷ μαλιστα αὐτῷ ἀοσπκοντι τοὐτῳ—in that way which pleaseth best his own mind; and in Christianity, Hierome sets it down for a rule, that 'homos præter mandatum est dedecus.'"—OWEN, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, p. 153, Gould's ed.]

been competent to man, had man continued unfallen, and remained in the enjoyment of his first privilege of sinless fellowship with his Maker. Had the worship of God by men continued on the footing of their unfallen privilege, and been a duty and ordinance of natural religion, and no more, it might not have been necessary to tie down the manner of it by positive regulations, or to fetter the intercourse between men and their Maker by express enactments and arbitrary institutions. But it was necessary for Christ, *first*, to open up the way to the sinner for a renewal of intercourse between him and God after it had been once closed by sin; and *second*, to prescribe and direct by positive regulation the manner in which such an approach might be kept up. In regard to both the possibility of a renewal of fellowship, and the terms on which ever after it was to be maintained, it was necessary to consult for the honour of God's injured government, and the authority of His broken but unchangeable law. And both of these points were determined and regulated by principles arising out of God's unalterable and sovereign justice and grace. The *terms* were laid down on which sinners might return to God, and the way of approach be opened to them again; and these terms, we know, must have been regulated by a regard to the principles of everlasting righteousness and mercy. The *manner* also in which the intercourse of sinners with God, once renewed, might be kept up was also prescribed; and that manner, we know, must likewise have been regulated by a regard to the principles of God's character as well as of ours. In other words, it was necessary, out of a regard to the principles of God's character as well as man's, that after the fall the manner of man's public intercourse with God should be regulated and prescribed by positive enactment, or that the ordinance of Church worship should be made a matter of express institution. Limiting our view to public worship as a mere ordinance of nature, no such necessity might have existed, or at least existed to the same extent. But regarding it as an ordinance of revelation and grace, destined to be the public and daily method of the intercourse of sinners with God, once lost and interrupted by sin, but now reopened and restored to them through a Saviour, it was necessary that the manner of worship as well as the possibility of worship at all, should be announced and fixed by Divine appointment.[1]

[1] Owen: a Discourse concerning Liturgies and their Imposition, *Works*,

II. In the exercise of the power intrusted to the Church in reference to public worship, it is its office to administer and carry out the appointments of Christ.

That there are positive institutions of worship appointed in connection with the Church, few will be disposed to deny. That there are ordinances of an arbitrary kind, framed and designed to express the homage of the collective body of believers in their act of worship to God, admits of no dispute. And it cannot be doubted that, since these ordinances cannot administer themselves, it is the office of the Church, in virtue of her authority, to dispense and carry them out for the benefit of the members. The office and authority of the Church in reference to the institutions of public worship, enacted by Christ for His people, are precisely parallel to the office and authority of the Church in reference to the doctrines He has revealed. It is simply and exclusively ministerial in both cases.[1] There is no more warrant in Scripture for the Church to add to the institutions, than there is for the Church to add to the doctrines of Christ. The very same principles that limit the authority of the Church in matters of faith, making its office declaratory of the truths before revealed and not creative of new truths not revealed, in like manner limit the authority of the Church in matters of public worship, making its office executive of ordinances and institutions previously established, and not invested with power to decree new observances not previously established. It is as steward and administrator of the mysteries instituted by Christ, and not as the inventor or framer of new mysteries of its own, that the

Gould's ed. vol. xv. pp. 33–46. Gillespie: Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies, *Presbyt. Arm.* vol. i. pp. 58–61, 133–136, 146–148. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. x. 8–18, 23–26.]

[1] ["Neque enim," says Calvin, arguing against the claims of the Church of Rome to the power of decreeing rites and ceremonies in public worship,—"Neque enim (quod adversarii nostri ad faciendam nobis invidiam inique mentiuntur) Ecclesiam ludibrio habemus; sed *obedientiæ* laudem, quâ majorem nullam agnoscit, illi tribuimus. Ipsi potius vehementer sunt Ecclesiæ injurii, qui adversus Dominum suum contumaciam illam faciunt, dum ultra progressam fingunt quam per Verbum Dei licuerit: ut taceam insignem esse impudentiam cum pari malitiâ conjunctam, assidue de Ecclesiæ potestate vociferari: interim et quid illi a Domino mandatum sit, et quam Domini mandato obedientiam debeat, dissimulare. At si nobis, ut par est, animus fuerit cum Ecclesiâ consentire, hoc magis ad rem pertinet, spectare ac meminisse quid nobis ac Ecclesiæ a Domino præcipiatur, ut Illi uno consensu obediamus. Non enim dubium est, quin cum Ecclesiâ optime consensuri simus, si nos Domino per omnia obedientes præstemus."—*Inst.* lib. iv. cap. x. 18.]

Church is uniformly exhibited to us in Scripture. These mysteries can derive no authority from their appointment by human power; the ordinances which the Church administers are authoritative only in so far as, and no further than, they are ordinances of Christ. Their virtue as means of grace depends upon their being institutions not of men, but of Christ; and public worship, whereby sinners in their Church state approach to God, and hold intercourse with Him, is only lawful and only blessed when it can claim its origin not from ecclesiastical persons or authority, but from express Divine appointment. When the Church goes beyond the warrant of Scripture in devising ordinances or appointing worship, it trespasses into a province not its own, and into which it can carry with it neither the stamp of authority from on high, nor the virtue of a blessing from on high. Any worship beyond the limits of Scripture direction is an approach to God unwarranted and unblessed; any attempt at intercourse with God, except through the regulated channel and authorized manner of such intercourse, is presumptuous and unsanctioned. The worship of the Church's own invention or appointment is "will-worship" (ἐθελοθρησκεια);[1] the addition to God's words or God's ordinances being as impious and unlawful as any alteration or diminution. The command, "Thou shalt not add unto them," when applied either to the truths or the ordinances of Christ, is as valid and binding as the precept, "Thou shalt not take from them."[2] The proper walk of the Church in both cases is within the boundaries of what is expressly revealed in Scripture, and up to those boundaries. The sin of addition errs as decidedly as the sin of omission. Beyond the limits of what is expressly appointed for sinners in the way of institutions of worship, the Church can have no authority for its doings, and can expect no blessing from its Lord. Worship in a way not appointed and explicitly warranted by God can carry with it no authority as a Church appointment, and convey no blessing as a means of grace.[3]

III. In restricting Church authority in reference to the

[1] Col. ii. 23. [2] Deut. iv. 2, xii. 32; Matt. xxviii. 20.

[3] ["Quod Christus debeat solus audiri Pater etiam de cœlo contestatur, dicens: 'Hic est Filius meus dilectissimus, in quo bene sensi, Ipsum audite.' Quare si solus Christus audiendus est, non debemus attendere quid alius ante nos faciendum esse putaverit, sed quid qui ante omnes est Christus prior fecerit. Neque enim hominis consuetudinem sequi oportet, sed Dei veritatem."—CYPRIAN, Epist. lxiii. 14, *Opera*, tom. ii. p. 385, ed. Migne. On this

worship of God to the administration and application of those institutions and rules of worship expressly revealed in His Word, there is an explanation of the general principle—I do not call it an addition to it—which it is necessary to make. The one grand office of the Church in reference to this matter is to administer and carry into effect the directory for worship found in the Bible. But there is this explanation to be taken along with the general and fundamental principle now announced. It is competent and necessary for the Church, in carrying out that principle, not to devise or appoint new institutions of worship of its own, but to apply the directory for worship contained in Scripture to new cases or emergencies as they occur.

This is not the exercise of new authority on the part of the Church acting in its own name; it is no more than the application of the old authority, as Christ has regulated and declared it, to a new case. It was not to be expected, nor was it possible, that every new conjuncture of circumstances in public worship, demanding regulation and arrangement by the authority of the Church, could be specified and adjudicated on in Scripture, any more than it could be expected as a thing possible that every new controversy in doctrine that might occur would be specified and adjudicated upon in Scripture. But there is a sufficient directory in doctrine laid down in the Bible to furnish the Church with those principles of truth which enable it to determine controversies of faith; and it does so on the occurrence of every fresh controversy, not by adding new doctrines to the Word of God, but by ministerially declaring and making application of the old in reference to the particular tenet in dispute. And so with regard to matters of worship. There is a sufficient directory for worship laid down in the Bible to furnish the Church with those principles of order which enable it to regulate every new case occurring in regard to the outward worship of the Church which requires to be regulated; and it does so in this instance also, not by adding new rules or institutions to the service of the Church, but by ministerially declaring and making application of

passage Cardinal Turrecremata rather naively remarks: "Vocem 'solus' non excludere Papam, vel prælatos, vel alios doctores aut prædicatores bonos, sed tantum Antichristos, id est, contrarios Christo, qui contraria prædicant." —Calvin, *Necessity of Reforming the Church. True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom*, etc., in Tracts relating to the Ref., Calvin Transl. Soc. Edin. 1844–51, vol. i. pp. 127–133, 151–154, 189, vol. iii. pp. 260–263, 270, 328 f.]

the old to the particular matter of order to be settled or determined. It is a new application of the Scripture directory for Church worship, not a new directory, nor even a new addition to the old. A Scripture example will sufficiently illustrate and give distinctness to the argument; and I adduce it the more willingly, that I may rescue the case from the misapplication to which it has not unfrequently been subjected, when it has been alleged as countenancing the very opposite doctrine. A dispute, or at least a doubt, had arisen in the Corinthian Church in regard to the lawfulness of eating meat, part of which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, lest the doing so should imply, or be understood to imply, an acknowledgment of the idol. The question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating such meat had been referred to Paul; and what is his decision in regard to it? He declares that an idol is in itself nothing; that meat offered unto idols was neither the better nor the worse on that account; and that every man, in point of conscience, was to be free to eat, notwithstanding that it had been so offered. But because every man's conscience might not see the matter in this light; because weak consciences might feel it to be a sin, and yet, because of the example of others who freely partook of the meat, might be emboldened to do the same, while yet they felt it to be a sin, —the apostle lays down the express injunction to refrain from it. Here we have the authority of Paul interposed to restrain a man in that which Paul himself declared to be indifferent and innocent; and upon this principle, that no member of the Church had a right to be a stumbling-block or occasion of sin to another. "For," says he, "when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."[1] And this Church regulation, laid down by the Apostle Paul individually, we find embodied in the decree of the apostles and elders met in synod at Jerusalem. It was authoritatively enacted as a rule of order for the Churches by that Council, that they were to "abstain from meats offered unto idols;"[2] and so it became a standing regulation for the whole Church in those days.

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 12, 13. [Cf. Calvin *in loc.* Hofmann, *Die heilige Schrift neuen Testaments*, 2ten Th. 2te Abth., Nördlingen 1864, pp. 177-183.]

[2] Acts xv. 29.

Upon what principle, I ask, did this exercise of Church power proceed in a matter of order appertaining to the Church? Was it an example of the power of the Church, to add new laws to the laws of Christ, or to make regulations of order for its members, which He had not made? To this effect the instance is frequently quoted. It is alleged to countenance the claim of the Church to the power of decreeing rites and ceremonies in cases indifferent. The very opposite is the true application of it. It is not an instance of the Church adding new regulations of its own to the laws of Christ; it is no more than an example of the Church ministerially declaring the law of Christ, previously revealed, and previously binding, to a new emergency, and making application of it to a fresh case that had occurred requiring to be regulated. The old law, binding before and enacted before, Paul distinctly enough announces when he tells the Corinthians in reference to the man, himself free in conscience to eat, who by eating became the occasion of offence to his brother: "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound so their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." This was the law or the regulation which Paul individually, and the Council of Jerusalem collectively, did but apply to the fresh emergency that occurred, in order to determine the new case in the Church needing to be determined.[1] Neither Paul nor the Council made a new law; they only made a new application of the old law. They ministerially applied and carried out the former and standing law of Christ's Church, to regulate a new point of order that had started up requiring their interposition. It was a standing appointment, known and binding long before in the Christian Church, that no member of it had a right, by doing what to himself might be lawful or innocent, to cause his brother to sin. The application of this permanent principle in the government of Christ's Church to the point of order, raised by the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols, was direct and simple enough: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat

[1] ["Nec nova lex est ab apostolis lata," says Calvin, speaking of the decision of the Council of Jerusalem, "sed *Divinum æternumque Dei mandatum de non violandâ caritate*. . . . At certum tamen aliquid præscribunt: nempe quatenus pro tempore expediebat docent ac designant quibus rebus in fratrum offensionem possint incurrere, quo ab illis caveant: nihil tamen novum ad æternam Dei Legem, quæ fratrum offensionem prohibet, de suo afferunt."—*Inst.* lib. iv. cap. x. 21.]

no flesh while the world standeth." And the embodiment of this general principle in the canon or regulation for order enacted by the Council of Jerusalem was not the decreeing by authority of the Church of a new regulation for its members, as has been often asserted, but rather the application to a present case of an old one.

It is not an addition, then, to the great fundamental principle formerly laid down in regard to the Church having authority only to administer and carry into effect the appointments of Christ, and not to make appointments of her own, when I say that the Church has power to apply the appointments of Christ to new cases of order and arrangement as they occur. The office of the Church is ministerial, to administer and execute the appointments of Christ in the department of the worship and service of God; but there is included in that office, from the very nature of it, the power to apply these appointments to every new case, as it arises, which demands to be regulated by them. The canon of the Synod at Jerusalem, held by the apostles and elders, with respect to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating meat offered to idols, is not an instance of the Church making decrees for the order and obedience of its members by its own authority, and beyond what had been decreed by Christ. On the contrary, it is an instance of the Church applying the decrees of Christ, previously binding on His people, to a fresh question of order that had arisen in the Christian society; and in so doing, acting strictly within the limits of what Christ had decreed.

There is one further explanation which should be made, in order that the office of Church power in connection with the public service of God in the Church may be distinctly understood. This further explanation is founded on a distinction which it is of great importance, in the argument as to the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies in religion, clearly to keep in view. There is a distinction between what is proper to Church worship as of Divine institution, and what belongs to it as of nature. There are certain things that belong to the practice of worship as being of Divine appointment and regulation; there are certain other things that belong to the practice of worship as being dictated and regulated by natural reason. The proper idea of public worship is the positive institution prescribed for the approach of sinners in their Church state to and their fellowship with God. In addition to this, there are circumstances of public

worship, not properly or distinctively belonging to it as worship, but common to it with the proceedings of every civil or merely human society. What belongs to the public service of the Church as Divine worship, distinctively so called, is of Divine appointment, and is regulated by the positive command of Christ. What belongs to the public service of the Church, not as Divine worship properly and strictly so called, but as the circumstances common to it with any service or solemn transaction of human society, is not of express appointment by God, but is the dictate of nature, and left to be regulated by the law of nature. In other words, the distinction which it is necessary to keep in view, and which we have had occasion repeatedly to refer to in connection with the power of the civil magistrate about religion, must also be attended to here in connection with the office of the Church about the public service of God,—I mean the distinction between matters *in sacris* and matters *circa sacra*. There are matters not *in* religion, but *about* religion, over which the civil magistrate has proper jurisdiction. And so, likewise, there are matters not *in* the public worship of God, but *about* the public worship of God, in regard to which the law of nature comes in. The *ceremonies* and institutions of Church worship are properly and distinctively matters *in sacris;* the *circumstances* of Church worship, or those that belong to it in common with the ordinary proceedings or peculiar solemnities of men, are properly and distinctively matters *circa sacra*. The ceremonies and institutions of worship are matters *in* the public worship of God; the circumstances of worship common to it with civil solemnities are matters *about* the public worship of God. Upon the ground of this distinction, which is a most important one, there is a further proposition, additional to the three already enunciated, which it is necessary to the argument to lay down, when considering the question of the office and power of the Church in connection with the public worship of God.

IV. Although the Church has no power in regard to the ceremonies and institutions of Divine service, except to administer and apply them, yet the Church has a certain power in reference to the circumstances connected with Divine service, and common to it with civil solemnities, to order and regulate them.

It is most important to remark, that, by the help of the distinction now adverted to, between the ceremonies or institutions of worship peculiar to it as a Divine ordinance, and the circum-

stances of worship common to it with other or civil solemnities, we entirely shut the door against the entrance of the Church, in its own discretion or authority, into the province of public worship properly so called. Within that province the authority of Christ alone is known or valid; and the institutions and regulations which He has prescribed are alone binding. In regard to what belongs to the worship of the Church properly so called, Christ claims the right to dictate alone, without rival and without partner in His office. But beyond that territory, and in the province of what is *circa sacra*, or not *in* the worship of God, but *about* it,—in the circumstances pertaining to it in common with the practice of any civil and well-ordered society among men,—the Church, by the aid of the light and law of nature, has authority to interfere.[1]

This office of the Church, not *in* the worship of God, but *about* it,—this power to regulate, not the ceremonies of Divine service, but the circumstances necessarily pertaining to it as well as to the services of any civil solemnity,—is defined by the Apostle Paul in the fourteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The canon of Church order, which is there announced both in its extent and limitations, will be best understood by looking at it in the light of the circumstances that called forth the announcement. Indecencies and disorders of a peculiar kind had arisen in the Church of Corinth in connection with the administration and details of public worship. In the first place, in the abuse of the extraordinary gift of tongues with which the members of that Church had been endowed, the custom had become common, when the congregation met for public worship, for those so gifted to speak in languages unknown to the rest, and even to speak, as it would appear, two or three together, to the introduction of utter confusion and disorder in the worshipping assembly. In the second place, females, forgetting the restraints appointed by their sex, had been accustomed publicly to mingle in the deliberations of the Church, and sought to speak, if not to take part in ruling, in their assemblies. These were the public scandals to which Paul sought to apply correction and restraint, by announcing those principles of Church order which were applicable to such cases, and bringing them to bear upon the Corinthian offenders. And in what manner does the apostle proceed to do so? The offences to be put down, although con-

[1] Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. vii.

nected with the conduct and observances of public worship in the Church, were yet offences against nature; and accordingly it is by an appeal to the principles of nature that Paul seeks to correct and restrain them. He lays down the general rule, applicable not only to all Christian assemblies or Churches, but also to all civil assemblies, and equally binding upon both: "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (*παντα· ἐυσχημονως και κατα ταξιν γινεσθω*). Indecencies were forbidden by the light of nature, by reason itself, in all societies, whether Christian or not; disorder was to be put down even upon principles that applied to civil assemblies, not less than to assemblies of the Church. And there was enough in the dictates of nature and reason itself to condemn what was contrary to decency and order, apart altogether from any positive regulations established in the Church, or peculiar to it. And accordingly the Church, as a society, having all the rights which any civil or voluntary society has to maintain order and decency in its assemblies, was entitled and bound to exercise that power to the restraint and correction of such improprieties. Had it been, not in the assembly of the Christian Church at Corinth, but in the civil assembly of the people at Corinth, or in the council presided over by the proconsul of Achaia, that such scandals had occurred, they would have been repressed and punished upon the same principles. Had it been in a public meeting of the citizens or senators at Corinth that two or three had spoken together, or spoken in unknown tongues, or that females had sought to address the assembly, or to rule in it, nature itself would have supplied both the warrant and the law to restrain such disorders. And when these disorders and indecencies occurred in the Christian Church, the very same principles were applicable to their correction. But in applying such principles, it was the Church legislating or administering power not *in* public worship, but *about* public worship. In carrying out the general rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order," the Church received no authority from the apostle to exercise jurisdiction within the territory belonging to the worship of God, but only authority to exercise jurisdiction in a territory connected indeed with the circumstances of worship, but really belonging to reason and nature. The offences of the Corinthian Christians were offered against the dictates of nature, and would have been no less offences if connected with the solemnities not of a Church,

but of a civil assembly; and the course of action prescribed to the Church for the purpose of correcting them, gave no power within the province of Divine worship, but only power about the circumstances connected with it. "Let all things be done decently and in order," was a rule giving power to the Church in common with every civil society to guard itself against abuses that might be common to both and fatal to both, but nothing further.

It is plain, then, both from the nature of the rule itself, and from the circumstances in which it was given, that the general canon for Church worship, "Let all things be done decently and in order," while it gives no authority to the Church in the matter of the rites and ceremonies and institutions of Divine service, except to administer them, does give authority to the Church in the matter of the circumstances of Divine service common to it with civil solemnities, in so far as is necessary for decency and to avoid disorder. There is a broad line of demarcation between these two things. In what belongs strictly to the institutions and ceremonies of worship the Church has no authority, except to dispense them as Christ has prescribed. In what belongs to the circumstances of worship necessary to its being dispensed with propriety, and so as to avoid confusion, the Church has authority to regulate them as nature and reason prescribe. On the one side of the line that separates these two provinces, are what belong to Church worship properly so called,—the positive rites and ceremonies and institutions that enter as essential elements into it; and here the Church is merely Christ's servant to administer and to carry them into effect. On the other side of that line are what belong to the circumstances of worship as necessary to its decent and orderly administration,—circumstances not peculiar to the solemnities of the Church, nor laid down in detail by Christ, but common to them with other civil solemnities, and left to be regulated by the dictates of reason and nature; and here the Church is the minister of nature and reason, and her actions must be determined by their declarations. In regard to, not the circumstances of worship, but its ceremonies, the Church has no discretion, but must take the law from the positive directory of Scripture. In regard again to, not the ceremonies, but the circumstances of worship, the Church has the discretion which nature and reason allow, and must be guided by the principles which they furnish as applicable to the particular case.

That these circumstances of order and decency are left to be regulated by the dictates of reason and nature applicable to each case, is apparent from the statements of the apostle in writing to the Corinthians on this matter. In reference to the peculiar scandals that prevailed among them, he appeals to the principles of reason, and nature, and common sense to put them down: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints." "It is a shame for women to speak in the Church."[1] And because the rule was previously binding by the dictates of reason and of nature, he lays it down as a standing and perpetual law in the Church, that all things within it were to be done "decently and in order,"—a law left open for the discretion of the Church to apply, as particular cases should require it, to the circumstances of public worship. But this rule, dictated by reason and nature in regard to the circumstances *about* worship, did not give to the Church any authority in regard to the ceremonies *in* worship. It did not permit the Church to carry its discretion or authority within the province already occupied by the positive institutions and express appointments of Christ. There the Church was already fettered by an express and positive directory for worship enacted by its Divine Head; and there the Church had no discretion, except to administer and apply it. In the circumstances of worship, the Church is the minister or servant of nature to carry into effect, according to the peculiarities of each particular case, the dictates of nature or reason, so that its solemnities, as well as those of any civil society, may be conducted according to order and decency. In the ceremonies of worship, the Church is the minister or servant of Christ, to carry into effect, according to His express directory, the rules for Divine service; in order that His rites, and ceremonies, and institutions, peculiar to the Church, and not common to it with any other society, may be administered in obedience to His authority, and in the way He has prescribed.

Such, then, is the office of the Church in regard to the circumstances of Divine worship, as contradistinguished from the ceremonies or institutions of Divine worship. In regard to the circumstances, as contradistinguished from the ceremonies, there

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 33, 35.

is a discretionary power allowed the Church, such as belongs to any civil society, to be used, as other societies use it, at the dictate of reason and nature, and to be directed to secure in the solemnities of the Church, as in any civil solemnities, the blessing of decency and order. Beyond this it does not go; nor can it give any claim to interfere with, to add to, or alter the institutions of Church worship which Christ has ordained in the Christian society. The assumption of such a power by the Church amounts to no more than this: that it has a right to exercise its own reason, like every other society, to guard itself against what is contrary to the dictates of reason in observing the positive institutions of Divine worship. It implies no authority to interfere by addition or alteration, or in any other way, with those institutions of worship. And yet I believe that it is from this quarter that the greatest danger is found to arise in the way of the Church arrogating to itself the power to decree rites and ceremonies *in* the worship of God. The acknowledged right that belongs to the Church, as it belongs to every voluntary society, to take order according to the dictates of reason and nature that its solemnities shall be conducted with propriety and without confusion, is interpreted as a right to add to or take from the positive institutions of worship according to the judgment or discretion of the Church. The rule of the apostle, as laid down to the Corinthian Church, plainly and undeniably included in it no power more than reason or nature would confer on any civil society in order to guard itself against those scandals or offences in the transaction of its business that are contrary to decency or order. This right, under the guidance of its own judgment and discretion, the Church has; but no more than this. Of course the difficulty is to draw the line between matters of decency and order, which it is competent to the Church to regulate in the circumstances of its worship, and matters of express appointment and command in the ceremonies of its worship, which it is not competent for the Church to regulate or interfere with. And yet I believe the difficulty of separating between these two things has been very greatly exaggerated. In the very acute and masterly treatise of George Gillespie, entitled *A Dispute against the English-Popish Ceremonies*, he lays down *three* marks by which to distinguish those matters of decency and order, which it is necessary and lawful for the Church at the dictate of reason and nature to

regulate, from those parts or elements of public worship in regard to which she has no authority but to administer them.[1]

"Three conditions," he says, "I find necessarily requisite in such a thing as the Church hath power to prescribe by her laws: *First*, It must be only a circumstance of Divine worship, and no substantial part of it—no sacred, significant, and efficacious ceremony."[2] There is plainly a wide and real difference between those matters that may be necessary or proper *about* Church worship, and those other matters that may be necessary and proper *in* worship; or, to adopt the old distinction, between matters *circa sacra* and matters *in sacris*. Church worship is itself an express and positive appointment of God; and the various parts or elements of worship, including the rites and ceremonies that enter into it, are no less positive Divine appointments. But there are circumstances connected with a Divine solemnity no less than with human solemnities, that do not belong to its essence, and form no necessary part of it. There are circumstances of time and place and form, necessary for the order and decency of the service of

[1] Gillespie, *English-Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. vii. 5–7.

[2] So soon as you attach a spiritual meaning, a sacred significance, to anything connected with worship, it becomes *eo ipso* a *part* of worship. It stands forthwith on a like footing with the typical ceremonies of the Old Testament, many of which were quite as insignificant in themselves as a white surplice or a lighted altar candle. As the Prayer-book of the Church of England says, "These be neither dark nor dumb ceremonies, but are so set forth that every man may understand what they do mean, and to what use they do serve. So that it is not like that they in time to come should be abused as other have been." Upon the correctness of this last statement, and the justice of the anticipation that good might arise from retaining humanly-devised rites in the worship of God to which a sacred meaning was expressly attached, the condition of the English Church in our own day furnishes a striking commentary. As to what constitutes a *part* of Divine worship, see Owen, *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, pp. 35–37, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xv.; Gillespie, *English-Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. v. vii. 5, 8, 13. [The literature and the liturgical system of the English High Church party at the present day supply abundant illustration of the effective way in which this principle of religious symbolism may be worked in support of new doctrines. "To the Greek and Latin sister Churches," says Mr. Perceval Ward, "she (the Church of England) seems to have lost the first principle of Christian worship—the Sacrifice of the Altar. We have to teach our teachers as well as our people this first principle of Christian worship. . . I need not say that the best way to teach this doctrine is the adoption of a high and noble ritual,—a ritual that shall compel the dullest and most thoughtless to ask, 'What mean ye by this service?'" *Difficulties of Re-Union*, pp. 93, 94, in *Essays on the Re-Union of Christendom*, edited by Rev. F. G. Lee, with Preface by Dr. Pusey, 1867. Compare an Essay on the *Symbolism of Ritual*, p. 523, in *The Church and the World*, edited by Orby Shipley, Lond. 1867, and the same publication for 1866 and 1867, *passim*.]

the Church, as much as for the service or actions of any civil or voluntary society; and these, though connected with, are no portion of, Divine worship. *When* worship is to be performed on the Sabbath, for example,—*where* it is to be dispensed,—*how long* the service is to continue,—are points necessary to be regulated in regard to the action of the Church as much as in regard to the action of a mere private and human society; and yet they constitute no part of the worship of God. And they are to be regulated by the Church in the same way and upon the same principles as any other society would regulate these matters; namely, by a regard to the dictates of natural reason, which have not been superseded, but rather expressly called into exercise in the Christian society for such purposes.

Second, The circumstances left to the Church to determine by the dictate of natural reason, and according to the rule of decency and order, "must be such as are not determinable by Scripture." Of course, whatever in the worship of God is either appointed expressly by Scripture, or may be justly inferred from Scripture, cannot be left open to the jurisdiction of the Church, or to the determination of men's reason. It is only beyond the express and positive institutions or regulations of Scripture that there is any field for the exercise of the Church's authority and judgment. Within the limits of what strictly and properly belongs to public worship, the directory of Scripture is both sufficient and of exclusive authority; and the service of the Church is a matter of positive enactment, suited for and binding upon all times and all nations. But beyond the limits of what strictly and properly belongs to Divine worship, there are circumstances that must vary with times and nations; and for that very reason they are circumstances not regulated in Scripture, but left to be ordered by the dictates of natural reason, such as would be sufficient to determine them in the case of any other society than the Church. In addition to the test of their being merely circumstances and not substantials of worship, they are also to be distinguished by the mark that from their very nature they are "not determinable from Scripture."

Third, The circumstances left open to the judgment of the Church to regulate according to the rule of decency and order, must be those for the appointment of which she is "able to give a sufficient reason and warrant." This third mark is necessary,

in order that the canon of Church order under consideration may not be interpreted so widely as to admit of the indefinite multiplication of rules and rubrics, even in matters that stand the two other tests already mentioned,—that is to say, in matters merely circumstantial, and not determinable from Scripture. Even in the instance of such, there must be a sufficient reason, either in the necessity of the act, or in the manifest Christian expediency of it, to justify the Church in adding to her canons of order, and limiting by these the Christian liberty of her members. There must be a sufficient reason, in the way of securing decency or preventing disorder, to warrant the Church in enacting regulations even in the circumstances of worship as contradistinguished from its ceremonies. Without some necessity laid upon it, and a sufficient reason to state for its procedure, the Church has no warrant to encroach upon the liberty of its members. And without this, moreover, there could be no satisfaction to give to the consciences of those members who might scruple as to the lawfulness of complying with its regulations. Even in matters lawful and indifferent, not belonging to Divine worship itself, but to the circumstances of it, the Church is bound to show a necessity or a sufficient reason for its enactments.

All these three tests of George Gillespie's are combined in the singularly judicious and well-balanced statement of the Confession of Faith on this point. After laying down the fundamental position, that "the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men," the Confession proceeds: "Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that *there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.*"[1]

[1] Conf. chap. i. 6.] Cf. *Catechism of the Principles and Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland*, sanctioned by the General Assembly, ed. 1863, Qu. 33–38, 59–61, 136, 141, 179. See also *Zwinglii Articuli*, x, xi.; *Conf.*

Every word in this brief but pregnant sentence has been well weighed by its authors, and deserves careful consideration from us. The things in connection with public worship which it is lawful for the Church to regulate must be "*circumstances*," not *parts* of Divine service; they must be "*concerning* the worship of God," not elements *in* it; they must be "*common* to *human* actions and societies," not *peculiar* to a *Divine* institution; they must be things with which reason or "*the light of nature*" is competent to deal; they are "to be ordered by *Christian prudence*," which will beware of laying needless restraints upon the liberty of brethren in the faith; and they are to be regulated in accordance with "*the general rules of the Word*," such as the apostolic canons referred to in the proofs to the Confession: "Let all things be done unto edification;" and, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

By such tests or marks as these, it is not a matter of much difficulty practically to determine what matters connected with the worship of God are, and what are not, within the apostolic canon, "Let all things be done decently and in order." They are the very things which reason is competent to regulate, which cannot be determined for all times and places by Scripture; which belong not to Church worship itself, but to the circumstances or accompaniments common to it with civil solemnities, and which must be ordered in the Church, as in any other society, so as to secure decency and to prevent confusion. The power which the apostle gives to regulate such matters is no power to enter within the proper field of Divine worship, and to add to, or alter, or regulate its rites and ceremonies and institutions. It has often indeed been argued as if the apostolic canon gave such authority. It has been maintained that the authority ascribed to the Church to regulate all things according to the law of decency and order, is an authority to deal with matters *in sacris*, and not merely *circa sacra*. But it is clear, both from the nature of the apostolic rule, and also from the application made of it in respect of the scandals in the Church at Corinth, that no such peculiar authority to intermeddle with the provisions of worship set up by Christ in His Church was ever intended. It needed no supereminent power within the sanctuary of God, no priestly or infallible jurisdiction

Belg. Art. vii.; *Catech. Heid.* 2, 96; *Conf. Helvet.* ii. cap. xxvii.; *Decl. Thorun. De cultu Dei*, 2, in Niemeyer's *Collectio Confess.* Lipsiæ, 1840, pp. 5, 362, 453, 531, 677.]

over sacred rites and institutions, no authority similar or equal to Christ's own over the order of His house, to tell the Corinthian believers that the circumstances connected with their worship of God must be regulated decently, and regulated without disorder. There is implied no power to add to or alter Christ's appointments for His Church, in the right to tell its members that they must not speak in the meetings of the Christian society in a way that would not be tolerated in any civil society; and that women were not to violate the restraints appointed to women, and respected and obeyed in every other public assembly. *Ἐν ὑμιν αὐτοις κρινατε. Οὐδε αὐτη ἡ φυσις διδασκει ὑμας;* "Let them use their own sense and judgment. Did not even reason and nature say the same?" And in assuming such an authority in pursuance of the apostolic rule, the Church was claiming and exercising no more than the right which reason and nature give to every lawful society, whether civil or sacred, to guard itself against those offences or disorders in the conduct of its affairs which even reason and nature condemn; nor in the right to exercise such an authority belonging to the Church is there the slightest ground for alleging that there is included a power to rule over the house of God in the solemn matter of worship, or to interfere to the smallest extent with the rites, and observances, and ceremonies which have been positively prescribed and regulated by the express directory found in Scripture for worship. In so far as regards the circumstances connected with the worship of God, in contradistinction to the worship itself, the Church is the minister of natural reason; and the rule for regulating such circumstances is the rule prescribed by natural reason, as interpreted by the canon of the apostle to the Corinthian Church. In so far as regards the ceremonies and institutions of worship, in contradistinction to the circumstances of their administration, the Church is the minister of Christ; and the rule to guide the Church in her administration is the express directory contained in the Scriptures. There is in the one case such a latitude of discretion allowed to the Church as nature and reason, interpreted by the apostolic rule, and applied to the changing circumstances of different times, and places, and nations, may permit. There is in the other case no latitude of discretion at all; the office of the Church being limited to the duty of administering the institutions of Christ, and carrying into effect the directory for worship which He has given in His Word.

The four propositions which have now been announced and illustrated seem fully and fairly to indicate the extent of Church power in connection with the public worship of God. At the basis of the whole argument, and as the governing principle that rules every subsequent step in it, lies the grand principle that, as regards the manner of the approach to God of sinners in their Church state, it is for God alone, and not for man, to dictate or prescribe. Next, it is the primary office of the Church, as the servant of Christ, to administer and carry into effect the express institutions of worship and directory for Church service which He has enacted. Still further, as included in that office, it is the duty and right of the Church to make application of the directory for worship prescribed in Scripture to every new case connected with the public service of the Church which comes fairly under its application, and requires to be so regulated; and lastly, beyond the fair application of any positive directory for worship enacted in Scripture, there are circumstances of worship, as contradistinguished from worship itself, necessary to the orderly and decent administration of it, which fall to be regulated by the Church according to the dictates of nature and reason, interpreted more especially by the apostolic canon. All these general principles appear to be borne out by Scripture; and they serve pretty distinctly to indicate the office of the Church in connection with the public worship of God, and the extent of its authority in that department.[1]

Such being seen to be the *extent* of Church power in this matter, it is natural to inquire, in the next place, what are the precise *limits* assigned to it? To this subject—although it has been partially discussed in the preceding remarks—I shall now endeavour more specifically to address myself.

SECTION II.—LIMITS OF CHURCH POWER WITH RESPECT TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

We have already dwelt at some length on the nature and extent of the power of the Church, in connection with the public services of the sanctuary. But there are certain limits to that power in this department of its exercise which it is most im-

[1] [Edwards, *Antapologia*, Lond. 1644, pp. 81–91. Ames, *Suit against Ceremonies*, Part ii. chap. i. 4, 5, 16-19, ii. 1, 8–14, iii. 5, etc. Principal Rule, *The Good Old Way Defended*, Edin. 1697, pp. 275-290.]

portant to note, more especially considering the strong tendency of Churches to abuse their authority in the matter of the rites and ceremonies of worship. There can be no doubt that one of the earliest as well as most prevailing errors that found its way into the primitive Church, was the adoption of the unscriptural principle, that the Church was at liberty, under the plea of edification, to add to and regulate for itself the institutions of worship.[1] The Jewish converts to Christianity in the early Church were permitted to bring along with them into its worship not a few of their own ceremonial and traditionary observances; and the Gentile converts in like manner, when they abjured heathenism, did not altogether lay aside the superstitious practices of their ancient faith. The Christian Church, in its worship, was early accommodated and corrupted, to suit in some measure the tastes of both; so that within the period of the first four or five centuries, there were introduced into the field of religious worship the germs of most, if not all, of the mass of superstitious observances by which the Church of Rome is at present distinguished. Even the Reformation did not apply a full and effectual correction to this superstitious and sensuous tendency on the part of the Churches that were in doctrine and faith reformed. In our own country, both in the northern and southern divisions of it, the history of the sore contendings between the advocates and opponents of Church rites and ceremonies, of human invention and authority, forms no unimportant or uninteresting part of its ecclesiastical history. In England, the prelates who took a leading part in the reformation of the Church, succeeded in retaining in its worship not a few of those ceremonies which had been used in the Church of Rome, partly with the mistaken notion of conciliating the adherents of the old superstition, and accommodating for a time the religious service of the reformed Church to their prejudices and habits.[2] And it is one of the darkest pages in the history of the Church of England, which tells of the struggles of

[1] ["Quod Dominus perfectæ justitiæ regulam traditurus omnes ejus partes ad voluntatem suam revocavit, in eo indicatur nihil esse Illi acceptius obedientiâ. . . . Omnibus enim sæculis *hæc irreligiosa religionis affectatio* (quia humano ingenio naturaliter insita est) se prodidit."—Calvin, *Inst.* lib. ii. cap. viii. 5.]

[2] [There is some truth in the pointed remark of Froude (*Hist. of Engl.* vol. viii. p. 270), that the wish of the majority in the Church of England at the Reformation, was to have "something which would preserve to them the *form* of superstition, without the *power* of it." The testimony of three

the Puritans against the imposition by ecclesiastical authority of its rites and ceremonies in worship, and of the final ejection from its pale of two thousand of the most godly of its ministers, in consequence mainly of the rigorous enforcement of such human inventions in Divine service. In Scotland, the advocates of the principle, that within the province of the worship of God no human authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, may enter, for the purpose of imposing its own arrangements, happily prevailed. And the Church of Scotland stands contrasted with the Church of England as well as with the Church of Rome, upon the ground of her assertion of the great truth, that the exercise of Church power in the worship of God is lawful to this extent, and no further, that it has a right to administer and carry into effect the express appointments of Christ, and no more.[1]

The limits set to the exercise of Church power in the province of Divine worship, are precisely the limits appointed to it in any other department of its exercise. The general Scriptural principles which, in respect to Church power viewed generally, we have seen to limit it, are the very principles which mark off the boundaries of its lawful exercise in connection with the worship

centuries of English Church history has sufficiently shown how strong and how inevitable the tendency is for the "power" to return again, wherever the "form" has been kept up. Principal Forrester, *Review and Consideration*, etc., Edin. 1706, pp. 277–284. Dr. Brown of Langton, *Letters on Puseyite Episcopacy*, Edin. 1842, pp. 40–51, 420–433.]

[1] [A sentence in the hastily drawn up Scots Confession of 1560 (ch. xx.) has been appealed to by some Episcopalians as sanctioning the Anglican and Lutheran principle of Church worship. On this point see Dr. Cunningham's remarks, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 252–3. The statement of Calderwood, with which Dr. Cunningham there expresses his concurrence, that this sentence was not meant "to be so taken as if the Kirk had power to institute sacred rites, but only to make institutions (or appointments) of order and decency in the ministration of such rites and parts of Divine service as the Lord had already instituted," might be easily confirmed by reference to the unmistakeable sentiments of John Knox, the author of the Confession of 1560, regarding this question. See, for example, his very graphic account of the public disputation between himself and Wynrame, the sub-prior of St. Andrews, in 1547. Sub-prior: "Why may not the Kirk, for good causes, devise ceremonies, to decore the Sacraments, and other Goddis service [Gottesdienst]?" Knox: "Because the Kirk ought to do nothing but in faith; and ought not to go before, but is bound to follow, the voice of the true Pastor." Sub-prior: "It is in faith that the ceremonies are commanded, and they have proper significations to help our faith; as the hardis in baptism signify the roughness of the law, and the oil the softness of Goddis mercy; and likewise every one of the ceremonies has a godly signification." Knox: "It is not enough that man invent a ceremony, and then give it a signification, according to his pleasure. For so might the ceremonies of the law, and this day the cere-

of God. The power of the Church in reference to worship is limited in four ways: by a regard to its *source*, or the authority of Christ; by a regard to its *rule*, or the Word of God; by a regard to its *objects*, or the liberties and edification of the members of the Church; and by a regard to its own *nature*, as exclusively spiritual. We shall find that in each of these ways the power of the Church in regard to the worship of God is restricted; and that the exercise of it in imposing human rites and ceremonies, as part of that worship, is condemned.

I. The exercise of Church power in reference to the worship of God is limited by a regard to the source of that power, or the authority of Christ.

If the Lord Jesus Christ be the only source of authority within His own Church, then it is abundantly obvious that it is an unlawful interference with that authority for any party, civil or ecclesiastical, to intermeddle with His arrangements, to claim right to regulate His institutions, or to pretend to the power of adding to, or of taking away from, or altering His appointments. The positive provisions of Divine worship, including all its parts, are as much under His authority, and owe their form and cha-

monies of Mahomet, be maintained. But if that anything proceed from faith, it maun have the Word of God for the assurance; for ye are not ignorant that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." . . . Sub-prior: "Will ye bind us so strait, that we may do nothing without the express Word of God? What an' I ask a drink? Think ye that I sin? And yet I have not Goddis word for me." Knox: "I would we should not jest in so grave a matter; neither would I that ye should begin to illude the truth with sophistry. And first, to your drink: I say that if ye either eat or drink without assurance of God's word, in so doing ye displease God. For says not the Apostle Paul even of meat and drink, that 'the creatures are sanctified unto man by the word and by prayer,' etc. . . . The question was not, nor is not, of meat and drink, wherein the kingdom of God consists not; but the question is of God's true worshipping, without the quhilk we can have no society with God. . . . One meat I may eat, another I may refuse, and that without scruple of conscience. I may change the one for the other as oft as I please. Whether we may do the same in matters of religion? May we cast away what we please, and retain what we please? If I be well remembered, Moses in the name of God says unto the people of Israel, 'All that the Lord thy God commandeth thee, that do thou: add nothing to it; diminish nothing from it.' *By this rule, think I, the Kirk of Christ will measure Goddis religion, and not by that which seemeth good in their own eyes.* . . . Such ceremonies as God has ordained we allow, and with reverence we use them. *But the question is of those that God has not ordained;* such as in baptism are spattil, salt, candill, cuide (*i.e.* a chrisom or face-cloth)—except it be to keep the bairn frae cauld—hardis, oil, and the rest of the Papisticall inventions."—*Hist. of the Ref. in Scotland;* Works, Laing's ed. Edin. 1846, vol. i. pp. 195–200. See also Knox's letter to the Queen Regent, vol. iv. pp. 80–84.]

racter and binding obligation as much to that authority, as the articles of faith which the Church holds. In neither case has He delegated His authority to any ecclesiastical substitute to exercise in His absence. In the province of Divine worship as much as in the province of Divine truth, He claims the sole right to dictate and impose His appointments on men. And if it is a matter militating very directly against His authority as Head of the Church, for the Church itself to dictate articles of faith to the consciences of men in the department of Divine truth, it is no less so for the Church itself to usurp the power to impose rites and ceremonies on the consciences of men in Divine worship. Of course, when I say this, I mean rites and ceremonies imposed as *parts* of Church worship, and not merely circumstances about Church worship, necessary to its administration according to decency and order, but forming no part of it. But that the rites and ceremonies imposed by the Church of Rome, and also the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church of England, are used as *parts* of worship, cannot be denied. It cannot be pleaded or pretended that they are necessary to the outward administration of it in a decent and orderly way. They are observed and imposed as ordinary parts of worship as much as any other of its institutions,—not perhaps as essential to its validity, but certainly as adding to the edification it imparts. It is on this very ground indeed—namely, that such rites and ceremonies are fraught with spiritual benefit and advantage in the ordinary practice of worship—that they are defended by their advocates. They are not accessories to worship, necessary on the ground of decency and order to its administration; but ordinary parts of worship, introduced into it for the purpose of contributing to its spiritual effect. In the words of the Prayer-book of the Church of England, they are held to be "such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification whereby he might be edified." And in this character, and pretending to be parts of Divine worship—if not necessary to its validity, at least necessary for its full effect—they cannot but be regarded as an encroachment on the province of Christ as Head of the Church, and are an unlawful interference with His authority. He claims as His exclusive right, authority to dictate what observances and institutions of worship He sees best for the

approach of sinners to God in a Church state; and it is a usurpation of His power for the Church itself to assume a right to regulate His institutions, to add to His appointments, and superinduce its own provision for worship upon His.

Such plainly is the limitation set to the exercise of Church power in worship by the authority of Christ. In the department of the rites and institutions of Divine service, His authority is supreme and exclusive; and if it is to be kept entire and untouched, there is no room for the entrance into the same province of the Church's power at all. This principle plainly excludes and condemns every ecclesiastical addition to the worship of God, and every human invention in its observances. It shuts up the Church to the simplicity of the Scriptural model; and forbids every arrangement within the sanctuary, and every appointment in holy things, of whatever nature it be, which does not find its precedent and warrant there. It condemns the impious and superstitious observances which the Church of Rome has unlawfully introduced into the worship of God: its spurious sacraments; its worship of the Virgin, and the saints, and the host; its fasts, and penances, and pilgrimages; and all the rest of its unwarranted and unscriptural impositions upon its members, unknown to the Word of God, and opposed to it.

But the principle now laid down does more than condemn the ceremonies in worship which Popery has imposed, and which are often as revolting to all right Christian taste and feeling as they are superstitious and unscriptural. It condemns no less those rites and ceremonies introduced into worship by the Church of England, and considered by her to be not only innocent, but subservient to its spiritual effect. Whether such rites and ceremonies may or may not conduce to the spiritual edification of those who make use of them in worship, is not the question to be determined,—although a right answer to this question would not be difficult to find, and it would militate strongly against the expediency of their introduction. But the only proper question is, Have these rites and ceremonies been appointed or not by the authority of Christ ruling alone and exclusively in His house? If not, then they are all unlawful encroachments upon that authority. It cannot be pretended that they are made no part of the ordinary worship of the Church, but rather belong to those outward circumstances of administration which fall under the apostolic canon, and are necessary to

the order and decency of its celebration. It cannot be pretended that the sign of the cross is necessary to avoid indecency or prevent confusion in the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. It cannot be pretended that turning of the face towards the east is essential to the orderly and decent performance of any part of public prayer. It cannot be pretended that the use of a white surplice in some parts of Divine service, and not in others, is necessary to the right discharge of the one or the other.[1] It cannot be pretended that the consecration of buildings in which public worship is conducted, or of ground in which the burial of the dead is to take place, is a ceremony dictated by natural reason, and absolutely necessary to give effect to the apostolic canon. It cannot be pretended that the bowing of the head at the repetition of the name of Jesus, and not at the repetition of the name of God, is decent and orderly in the one instance and not in the other. These ceremonies and rites cannot be, and are not alleged to form, any part of the circumstances of decency and order necessary to the due discharge of Divine worship, as they would be necessary to the due discharge of any civil solemnity in like circumstances. And if not, if they are not introduced into Church worship as essential to preserve decency or prevent disorder, then

[1] "As to the name surplice," says Wheatly, "I can give no better account of it than what I can put together from Durand, who tells us that it was so called because anciently this garment was put *super tunicas pellicas de pellibus mortuorum animalium factas*—upon leathern coats made of the hides of dead beasts; symbolically to represent that the offence of our first parents, which brought us under a necessity of wearing garments of skin, was now hid and covered by the grace of Christ, and that therefore we are clothed with the emblem of innocence. But whencesoever came the name, the thing certainly is good. . . . The colour of it is very suitable; for it aptly represents the innocence and righteousness wherewith God's ministers ought to be clothed. And it is observable that the Ancient of Days is represented as having garments *white as snow*; and that when our Saviour was transfigured, His raiment was *white as the light*; and that whenever angels have appeared to men, they have always been clothed in *white* apparel. The substance of it is linen; for woollen would be thought ridiculous, and silk would scarce be afforded. And we may observe that, under the Jewish dispensation, God Himself ordered that the priests *should not gird themselves with anything that caused sweat*, to signify the purity of heart that ought to be in those that were set apart to the performance of Divine service; for which reason the Jewish ephods were linen. . . . The Levites also that were singers were arrayed in *white linen*; and to the Lamb's wife was granted that she should be arrayed in *fine linen, white and clean*; for the fine linen is, *i.e.* represents, the righteousness of saints."—*Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer*, Lond. 1853, p. 100 f.; see also pp. 105, 106, 416–418. Proctor, *Hist. of Book of Common Prayer*, Cambridge 1855, p. 210, etc.

they must be introduced into Church worship as parts of it, considered to be necessary or at least conducive to its full or better effect. Viewed in this light, we are warranted to say in regard to them, without at all requiring to enter on the question of whether they contribute to the edification of the worshipper and the better effect of the worship or not, that they are unwarranted by the authority of Christ as revealed in His Word, and are therefore unlawful interferences with His power and rights as the only Head of ordinances in His Church.

II. The exercise of Church power in the matter of worship is limited by a regard to its rule, or the revealed Word of God.

Were a regard to the authority of Christ as the Head of the Church, and therefore the Head of ordinances in the Church, to be put out of view altogether, the rule which is appointed for the exercise of Church power, and to which it is bound to adhere, would itself condemn the invention of rites and ceremonies by ecclesiastical authority, and the imposition of human ordinances in the worship of the Church. There can be no law for the regulation of Divine service, any more than for any other department of the Church's duty, except the law of Scripture, to the exclusion of the arbitrary will or capricious discretion of all parties, civil or ecclesiastical. And if the matters of worship as well as matters of faith which the Church has to deal with are to be regarded according to that law, there can be no room for the exercise of human judgment in the case, and no door left open for the use of ecclesiastical discretion. In the department of worship as well as in the department of doctrine, the Church has no latitude beyond the express warrant of Scripture, and is forbidden as much to administer a worship not there revealed, as to preach a Gospel not there revealed. The single fact that the rule of Church power in the worship of God is the rule of Scripture, is decisive of the whole controversy in regard to rites and ceremonies, and ties up the Church to the ministerial office of administering a directory made for it, instead of presumptuously attempting to make a new directory for itself. The worship not enjoined in the Word of God is "will-worship" (ἐθελοθρησκεια), and as such neither lawful nor blessed.

There is no possibility of evading this argument, except by denying that the Scriptures are the only rule for worship, or by denying that they are a sufficient one. Neither of these denials

can be reasonably made. The Scriptures are the only rule for worship, as truly as they are the only rule for the Church in any other department of her duties. And the Scriptures are sufficient for that purpose; for they contain a directory for worship, either expressly inculcated, or justly to be inferred from its statements, sufficient for the guidance of the Church in every necessary part of worship. There are, *first*, express precepts contained in Scripture, and designed to regulate the practice of Divine worship in the Church as to ordinances and services; *second*, There are particular examples of worship in its various parts recorded in Scripture, and both fitted and intended to be binding and guiding models for subsequent ages. And, *third*, When neither express precepts nor express examples are to be met with, there are general Scripture principles applicable to public worship, enough to constitute a sufficient directory in the matter. Anything beyond that directory in the celebration of worship is unwarranted and superstitious. And the danger of tampering with uncommanded rites and observances is not small. Let the evil of "teaching for doctrines or duties the commandments and ordinances of men" be once introduced into the Church, and a departure from the simplicity of Scripture worship once begun, and superstitions will strengthen and grow apace. In point of safety as well as in point of principle, it is the duty of the Church to adhere with undeviating strictness to the model of Scripture, and to shun the exercise of any power in Church worship beyond the limits of that directory expressly laid down in the Word of God.

The limitation affixed to the use of Church power in public worship, by a regard to the authority of Scripture as its rule, is exactly to the same effect as the limitation set to it by a regard to the authority of Christ as its source. Scripture, because the revealed expression of Christ's will in the matter, affixes the same boundaries to the exercise of ecclesiastical power in the worship of the Church, as does the authority of Christ as the Head of the Church. By both there is a field left for the use and discretion of natural reason, in ordering the necessary circumstances connected with the administration of it. The Bible was never intended either to bestow or to supersede common sense, whether employed about the outward and non-essential circumstances of Divine worship, or the outward and non-essential circumstances of any civil and human solemnity. The Bible was never intended

to supplant natural reason in the department of matters essential to order and decency in the Church, as much as to order and decency anywhere else. But within the province of what is essential and proper to public worship as an ordinance of God, the Scriptures are the only rule; and the appointment of rites and ceremonies, as part of the ordinary public worship of God, is a sin against the authority of His Word as the sole and the sufficient rule in the matter. Perhaps one of the most flagrant and offensive examples of such an offence in connection with Divine worship, is the conduct of the Church of Rome, in arbitrarily declaring the Apocryphal writings to be canonical and inspired of God, and introducing them into the service of the Church in public worship, as of the same authority with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Worse by far than the introduction into the worship of God of a mere ecclesiastical ceremony, unknown or opposed to Scripture in some particular instance,—this is an attack on the authority of Scripture generally, by introducing into public worship the writings of man, as entitled to the same place and the same sway as the Word of God. And in the catalogue of human inventions introduced into the worship of the sanctuary in the Church of England, certainly not the least, or the least offensive, is the appointment of Apocryphal books to be read occasionally as part of the ordinary service, "for example of life and instruction of manners."[1] Although she does not ascribe to these spurious writings the character of inspired Scripture, as Popery does, the Church of England cannot be considered without serious blame in introducing them into the public worship of God as an occasional part of her services. It is an exercise of power, in regard to public worship, that very greatly offends against the authority of the Word of God as the sole rule of worship, to the exclusion of anything not expressly warranted by itself, and more especially to the exclusion from the service of the sanctuary of writings that pretend to the same authority with itself.

III. The exercise of Church power in the worship of God is limited by a regard to its objects, or to the liberties and edification of the members of the Church.

The introduction of human rites and ceremonies into the worship of the Church, by ecclesiastical authority, very directly

[1] Art. vi.

goes to oppress the consciences and abridge the spiritual freedom of Christ's people. In so far as the provisions of public worship are appointed by Christ, and expressly regulated in His Word, the plea of conscience cannot lawfully come in to resist their observance, or object against the enforcement of them. Conscience has no right, and can possess no liberties, in opposition to the ordinances of Him who is the Lord of the conscience. But the rights of conscience furnish a plea that may lawfully be urged in opposition to ordinances and ceremonies imposed by mere human authority, and enforced by ecclesiastical power. In so far as the provisions of worship in the Church are merely human, and not of Christ, the conscience of the members who are called upon to comply with such provisions, when grieved and offended, has a right to be heard and respected. Even when the ceremonies enjoined are in themselves indifferent and not offensive, the fact that they are imposed by man as part of a service which Christ alone has a right to impose,—that as portions of a Divine ordinance they are introduced by human authority, and not by the authority of Christ,—is itself sufficient, whatever be their character as in themselves, and apart from this introduction blameless or not, to evince that they are unlawful. Every part of Church worship, because an ordinance of God, is binding upon the conscience by His authority: it imposes a kind of obligation which no other solemnity can impose. And when, as part of that ordinance, there is introduced some rite or ceremony or appointment of man, claiming to have an equal authority, and to lay upon the conscience the same obligation, however harmless it may be in itself, it is an offence against the liberty and rights of the Christian people of the Church. It is of no avail to allege, that the members of the Church which imposes ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies as part of a Divine ordinance, have the alternative open to them of withdrawing from the communion of the Church if their consciences are aggrieved, and so preserving their Christian liberty by secession. The Church has no right to offer to its members the alternative of submission to her commanded ceremonies or the forfeiture of Church communion, and by an exercise of its authority to shut them up to the adoption of the one or the other of these two things. The Church has no right to impose on the conscience or obedience of its members its own ecclesiastical inventions, by the force or terror of excommunica-

tion from its fellowship. To do so, is to forget that she has no title to make terms of communion for herself, or to enforce any but what Christ has laid down. It is to forget that she has no right to make still narrower the narrow gate of entrance into the Church, by restrictions of her own devising. To lay down a formula of Church worship of her own, to appoint rites and ceremonies of her own, and to enforce these under the alternative of forfeiture of Church fellowship, is a violent and unlawful encroachment upon the conscience and the liberties of Christ's people.

The restriction thus put upon the exercise of Church power in public worship, by a due regard to the liberties of Christ's people, effectually excludes the introduction into it of human arrangements or ecclesiastical ordinances. We have already had occasion to remark, in the case of the Corinthian Church, how, with regard to a practice declared to be indifferent and innocent by Paul himself, he nevertheless refused to adopt it in his own conduct,—and much more would he have refused to impose it on others who deemed it not innocent,—when he saw it to "wound their weak consciences." In the case of meat offered to idols, although in his own estimation it was neither the better nor the worse for being so offered, yet he laid down the principle, "I will not eat meat so long as the world standeth, if it give occasion of stumbling to my brother."[1] And the Council at Jerusalem embodied the same general principle in one of its canons for Church order.[2] It was enough to justify an express prohibition of a practice in itself harmless, if that practice offended even the mistaken consciences of any of Christ's people. Respect, then, to the liberties of its members, as that liberty is interpreted by the apostle and the council at Jerusalem, must *à fortiori* prevent the imposition, by ecclesiastical authority, upon them of practices or ordinances in regard to which their consciences have reason to be offended, because they are not blameless. In such a light must many of the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England be regarded; and on this ground the Puritans resisted the imposition of them, although in vain. These ceremonies, whatever might be their own character when viewed apart by themselves, were not blameless, because they were accounted part and parcel of the corruptions of the Papal apostasy,

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 13. [2] Acts xv. 20, 29.

—"relics of the Amorites," as Bishop Jewel called them,—and n consequence, directly fitted to ensnare consciences neither weak nor mistaken, and to involve the abettors and practisers of them in the sin of partaking in its superstitions. Kneeling at the communion, for example, whether blameless or not in itself, formed part of the Popish system of transubstantiation, and of the idolatrous worship paid to the host. Stated fasts and holidays appointed and observed by the Church—whatever might be said in favour of them considered apart and by themselves—were part and parcel of the Romish claim to impart holiness to times and seasons by ecclesiastical authority alone. The surplice, appropriated as the dress of the minister in certain parts of worship and not in others, was an element in the Popish theory of priestly virtue and sacramental grace. The sign of the cross in baptism could not be separated from the Romish doctrine of the *opus operatum* in the ordinance. And it was not weak consciences alone, but enlightened consciences, that felt aggrieved and oppressed, when these and like ceremonies were imposed by ecclesiastical authority upon them, under the pain, if they refused to conform to such superstitions, of forfeiting the communion and privileges of the Church.[1] A due regard to the liberty of conscience belonging to Christ's people forbids the exercise of Church power in the introduction of such ecclesiastical ordinances in the worship of God.

IV. The exercise of Church power in the worship of God is limited by the proper nature of that power, as exclusively spiritual.

There are no more than *two* ways in which a properly spiritual power can be brought to bear upon the souls of the worshippers in public worship. There may be, in the first place, a spiritual power or virtue connected with the truth which the Church publishes, by which it produces a spiritual effect on the soul. Or there may be, in the second place, a sacramental grace or virtue connected with the outward and sensible ordinances which the Church administers, by which they produce a spiritual effect on the soul. In the one case, it is the Spirit of God employing the teaching of truth by the Church as the channel through which He communicates a spiritual virtue. In the other case, it is the Spirit of God employing the dispensation of ordinances by the Church as

[1] [Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. ii. Tract. i. cap. vi. Calderwood, *Altare Damascenum, passim.*]

the channel through which He communicates a spiritual virtue. Through both the one and the other of these instrumentalities does the Spirit of God usually operate upon the souls of men in the ordinances of public worship, so as to become a spiritual power within their understandings and their hearts. But beyond these means of spiritual grace, the Spirit of God does not usually go. He does not employ the inventions and ordinances of men as His instruments in either of these two ways. He does not make them by His presence and power to be means of grace, either by employing them to teach truth, or by using them, instead of or in addition to the divinely appointed ordinances and Sacraments of the Church, to communicate grace.

1. The Spirit of God does not employ the rites and ceremonies of men to be teaching signs in the Church, and to communicate truth; nor does He make these rites and ceremonies, as mystical or significant types declaring the truth, to be a spiritual power in the hearts of men. Upon this very ground the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church of its own authority are sometimes defended. They are pleaded for as significant signs, capable of teaching spiritual truths, and actually employed as instruments by the Spirit of God for that end. The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England speaks of them under that character. It declares them to be "neither dark nor dumb, but such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification." [1] Such

[1] ["Saravia holdeth," says George Gillespie, "that 'by the sign of the cross we profess ourselves Christians.' Bishop Mortoun calleth the cross 'a sign of constant profession of Christianity.' Hooker calleth it 'Christ's mark applied unto that part where bashfulness appeareth, in token that they which are Christians should be at no time ashamed of His ignominy.' Dr. Burges maintaineth the using of the surplice, 'to signify the pureness that ought to be in the minister of God.' Paybody will have kneeling at the Lord's Supper to be 'a signification of the humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ.' The prayer which the English service-book appointeth bishops to use after the confirming of children by the imposition of hands, avoucheth that ceremony of confirmation for 'a sign whereby those children are certified of God's favour and goodwill towards them.' In general, our opposites defend that the Church hath power to ordain such ceremonies as by admonishing men of their duty, and by expressing such spiritual and heavenly affections, dispositions, motions, or desires as should be in men, do thereby stir them up to greater fervour and devotion."—*Engl. Popish Cer.* Part iii. ch. v. 1. Saravia, *De Divers. Grad. Minist. Evang.* cap. 24, sec. 25. Field, *On the Church*, 2d ed. B. iv. ch. 31, p. 396. Hooker, *Eccles. Pol. Lib.* B. v. ch. lxv. 11. Burges, *Lawfulness of Kneeling*, ch. xvii. p. 52. Paybody, *Apol. for Kneeling*, Part iii. ch. ii. 15.]

unquestionably was the character of the rites and ceremonies once appointed by God Himself in the Old Testament Church. They formed, in addition to other characters that belonged to them, a great system of types, or teaching signs, the shadows and pictures of spiritual truths; and employed in that capacity by the Spirit of God to produce the spiritual effect of truth upon the understandings and hearts of the worshippers. That great system of typology in the ancient Church was an instrument for communicating spiritual truth in part before the truth itself was fully revealed. But these significant and teaching ceremonies ordained by God Himself until a better and more spiritual system was introduced, have now been done away. They are unsuited to the spiritual nature of the Gospel economy. They have given place to a higher and better dispensation, in which doctrines are not taught by types or significant actions, but by the truth itself impressed by the Spirit of God on the soul. And if the typology of a former Church, *divinely* appointed, is forbidden to be used, as inconsistent with the spiritual nature of worship now, shall we say that a *human* typology of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies, mystical and significant, is to be accounted as lawfully standing in their place? An intelligent and proper regard to the nature of Church power in the New Testament Church, as distinctively and properly spiritual, itself forbids the use of human rites and ceremonies in Divine worship as typical or significant signs.[1]

2. The Spirit of God does not employ human rites and ceremonies in the second way I have mentioned, or as ordinances linked with spiritual grace, instead of or in addition to those of Divine appointment. Under this second aspect of them, the use of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies is sometimes defended. They have been pleaded for as if they were ordinances like the Sacraments of the New Testament,—outward acts linked to inward grace,—sensible signs connected in some mysterious manner with a spiritual power. Such a theory can consistently be maintained only on the principle of the *opus operatum* of the Church of Rome, or of the power of the priest to communicate a priestly virtue and sacramental grace to the outward institutions that he administers. Here, too, an intelligent and due regard to the nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, would declare

[1] [Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. ii. Tract. i. cap. vii., *Probl. de Cer. affect.* 3–8.]

the fallacy of such a theory. As human and not Divine ordinances, the Spirit of God does not employ them as means of grace; nor does He pour through the channel of their administration by the Church the tide of His spiritual influence. They are of man, and not of God; and therefore they carry with them no spiritual blessing from the Spirit. And if they have any virtue or power at all, it must be supposed to be derived from the Church in appointing or dispensing them,—from the priestly grace or sacramental charm which the Church, according to the Popish principle, has ability to impart. A right understanding of the exclusively spiritual nature of the power of the Church would forbid such a notion. The only power which the Church is the instrument of dispensing through ordinances is the power of the Spirit, given not to human inventions, nor in connection with ecclesiastical and uncommanded ceremonies, but only to the ordinances and Sacraments appointed by God. The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual, and linked exclusively to the outward ordinances which have been enacted by Christ. She has no power to communicate grace *ex opere operato*, through rites and ceremonies of her own. The very nature of that power forbids the use of ecclesiastical ordinances imposed by its own authority in the Church.[1]

[1] [*The Plea of Presbytery*, by Ministers of the Synod of Ulster, Glasgow 1840, pp. 417–457. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. i. pp. 31–37. vol. ii. pp. 68–73. vol. iv. pp. 250–256.]

CHAPTER III.

PRESCRIBED FORMS OF PRAYER.

WE have now considered, as minutely as our restricted time will permit, those general principles in Scripture and reason which determine the extent and limits of Church power in matters of Divine worship, and more especially in reference to rites and ceremonies. In the course of the discussion, opportunity has occurred to apply these principles to not a few of those appointments, devised by men, and imposed by ecclesiastical authority, which we hold to be corruptions in the public worship both of the Church of Rome and the Church of England. Were it necessary or expedient at present to advance further in the same direction, the principles of Church authority in worship already announced might easily be applied in detail, and successively, to every human rite or ceremony which is used as a part of Divine service in any existing communion of Christians, and would avail to show the unlawfulness of their introduction into the public worship of the Church. But what has already been done in that department of the argument may suffice. The general principle already established, and which is so broadly announced by the standards of our Church—the principle that forbids "the worship of God in any way not appointed in His word"—is decisive of the whole controversy, and shuts out by one clear and conclusive sentence whatever rite or ceremony is of human appointment in Divine worship. The manifold applications of this principle it is wholly needless to follow out in detail. The assertion of the opposite principle, or the assertion of a right to introduce human inventions into the worship of God, even although limited, as it is in the Church of England, by the proviso that they shall not contradict Scripture, is one that carries with it the most ruinous results. In the solemn matter of the approach of sinners to God in worship, it necessarily infers the lawfulness of worshipping

Him with our own, and not with what is His; as if it were competent or right for men to worship God at a venture, and by such means as, appointed by them in their ignorance, cannot be known to be acceptable to Him. In so far as Church worship is made up of human elements, introduced by man, and not expressly appointed by Christ, to that extent we venture to approach the High and Holy One by rites and ordinances in regard to which we have no ground to say or know that they please God, and are not, on the contrary, displeasing in His eyes: we are worshipping Him at the peril of being told that our worship is our own and not God's,—a service not required at our hands, and not accepted at His. The principle involved in such a procedure is a dangerous one. It plainly implies that a sinner may, at least within certain limits, approach God through means of his own inventions, and seek acceptance in worship through his own provisions of worship. It implies that to a certain extent it is for man and not for God to dictate the way and manner of fellowship between them; and that, if it do not contradict expressly the appointments of Scripture, it is free to man to take his own way in seeking audience with God, and maintaining communion with Him. And who can wonder if such will-worship of man's should be unblessed; and that in so far as the service of God is turned from a Divine ordinance into a human one, it should be open to the solemn rebuke, "Who hath required this at your hands, when ye come to appear before me?" "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

But although it is not necessary to pursue the argument further in its minuter applications to rites and ceremonies of ecclesiastical appointment, I am desirous, before leaving the subject altogether, to consider more particularly one imposition by Church authority in matters of worship which may be deserving of separate consideration. I refer to the subject of prescribed forms of prayer. The prominence given to prayer as part of the ordinary worship of God, and the practical importance attaching to the question as to the manner of prayer in the public service of the Church, seem to mark it out as entitled to more detailed discussion. That prayer is an essential and ought to form a large part of Church worship, and that it is of permanent obligation as an ordinance of God, no one pretends to deny; and the only question comes to be, What power is it lawful or expedient for the

Church to use in laying down regulations as to the manner in which it is to be offered to God, and more especially in enacting precomposed forms of prayer for ministers and people in Divine worship? Is it the duty of the Church, in the exercise of the power committed to her in connection with matters of worship, to leave open to the determination of circumstances, or the discretion of the officiating minister, the manner of prayer? Or is it the right and duty of the Church to fetter that liberty for the sake of order, to prescribe forms of public prayer for the use of the Church, and to exclude every other manner of it?

Now it is of very great importance in this discussion, to bear in mind what is the point at issue between the advocates and opponents of liturgies or prescribed forms of prayer in Church worship. If the *status quæstionis* is distinctly apprehended and fairly laid down, there is not much difficulty in arriving at a right determination in regard to the matter. If, on the contrary, the *status quæstionis* is not properly settled and clearly kept in view, the argument may be involved in no small perplexity. Let us endeavour, in the first place, to limit the discussion to the real point in dispute.

I. The controversy between the abettors and opponents of liturgies does not turn upon the lawfulness or the reverse of some *form* of prayer of one kind or other in Church worship.

So far from denying that a form of prayer may lawfully be used by the members of the Church in public worship, every one must admit that some form or other is both lawful and necessary in all joint or social prayer. It is not possible, from the very nature of the case, that in social prayer or in Church prayer every one should be able to use the words which his own thoughts or feelings prompt as the individual expression of his own desires towards God. Whether it be in the family, or in the social circle, or in the public congregation of the Church, one as the organ of the rest must offer up prayer for all, in language which the others adopt from him as the utterance of their hearts, and not in language which each one's own heart suggests. There must be a form of words employed wherever there is prayer at all in which more than one concur; and a form of words which each man does not choose for himself, but adopts from him who is the organ to lead the devotions of all. A form of words in which prayer is embodied is absolutely necessary for Church worship,

whether that form be framed at the moment by the officiating minister, or arranged by himself beforehand, or previously dictated to him by ecclesiastical authority.

II. The point in controversy between the advocates and adversaries of liturgies is not the question of the lawfulness of such forms of public prayer being premeditated or precomposed by the minister who is appointed to conduct the devotions of the congregation.[1]

Under the felt weight of the responsibility of his office, and with the special character and circumstances and spiritual wants of the congregation over which he presides full in view, it is perfectly lawful, and may sometimes be highly expedient, for the minister to meditate beforehand in what method he ought to address God, for what special blessings he ought to plead, what sins or backslidings he ought to confess on their behalf, and to arrange all this in a form of words suitable to the occasion. It was never alleged, except by very unwise defenders of the privilege of free or extempore prayer, that it was essentially necessary to its right character as prayer that it should, as to substance and manner and words, be entirely unpremeditated, and framed at the instant of its utterance. There is nothing in premeditated or precomposed prayer, viewed in itself, to hinder the fervency or mar the effect of devotion, provided that it is premeditated or precomposed with special reference to the desire of grace, or confessions of sin, or subjects of supplication, appropriate to the case and circumstances of the congregation. Under this limitation, it is lawful for a minister to compose the prayers beforehand by which he is to lead the devotions of a congregation, if from special circumstances he may find it to be for edification; in the same manner as it is lawful for him to compose the sermons beforehand by which he is to lead the thoughts of the congregation in their meditation on Divine truth. The debate respecting liturgies does not turn on the lawfulness or expediency of the minister who officiates in worship arranging before-

[1] [That this is the point in debate, is almost invariably taken for granted by the advocates of liturgies. Thus, to give one instance out of many, the whole of Bishop King's argument in his *Discourse concerning the Inventions of Men in the Worship of God*, 5th ed. pp. 37–57, turns on the assumption that free prayer means unpremeditated prayer, and that the alternative proposed instead of a liturgy consists in petitions absolutely extemporized at the moment of utterance.]

hand or premeditating the form of words in which he is to officiate.

III. The dispute between the friends and opponents of liturgies does not turn on the lawfulness of using inspired forms in the devotional services of the Church, whether these be in the shape of forms of prayer or forms of praise.

It is not denied by either party that it is lawful to employ in the public service of the Church that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly known by the name of the Lord's Prayer, in the very language in which it was taught eighteen hundred years ago to them.[1] The lawfulness is not questioned by either party, of employing one or other of the forms of apostolical benediction in the language in which apostles used them, for the purpose of imploring a blessing on the people now. Nor, on the other hand, in the department of praise, is the lawfulness questioned by either party, of making use of the Psalms of David as set forms by which we may now rightly express to God our thanksgiving and our praise. Such set forms as we find in Scripture, adapted to either prayer or praise, no one denies the lawfulness of adopting and using as circumstances may require. If there were an inspired prayer-book as there is an inspired psalm-book, it might be not only lawful to employ the former in the conducting the supplications of the congregation, but unlawful to employ any other form.[2]

IV. The debate between the advocates and opponents of liturgies does not turn upon the lawfulness of employing set forms of public prayer upon special occasions or emergencies in the Church, which may demand or justify such special provision for the public worship of God.[3]

There is a wide distinction between the constant and perpetual duty of the Church in regard to public forms of prayer,

[1] ["And because the prayer which Christ taught His disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of the Church."—*Westminster Directory for Public Worship.* "The Lord's Prayer is not only for direction as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers; but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer."—*Larger Catech.* Q. 187.]

[2] [Compare Preface to Book of Common Order, *Dunlop's Collection*, Edin. 1722, vol. ii. pp. 395–398.]

[3] ["Whereas you say," says an eminent and learned Presbyterian theologian, "'There is this great controversy upon the ordinance of public worship

and the occasional or temporary duty of the Church on special occasions or emergencies. The Church may be, in the providence of God, reduced to such a state of depression, or be placed in circumstances so unfavourable, as to be compelled, for carrying on the work of the ministry, and for maintaining the worship of God in congregations, to employ ministers who are unable properly to conduct the devotions of the sanctuary without the help of forms of prayer, and who may be unfitted to compose them for themselves. Such emergencies have occurred in the history of the Church in particular countries, both in early and in later times. A Church so imperfectly organized or reformed, a Church sunk so low as to need such special provisions, may lawfully employ them; and in such circumstances ministers may be rightly and properly recommended to use forms of prayer in public worship, rather than that the work of the ministry should itself be left undone. Historically, I believe, it can be established that the introduction of liturgies in the primitive Church at the first was very much necessitated by such a state of things, when the Church, through the inroad of a sore and rapid declension, had been brought so low that even bishops were found who could not sign their names, and priests who did not know their letters.[1] In such an emergency, the lesser obligation must give place to the greater; and forms of prayer, whatever their evils be in other circumstances, may be lawfully introduced, lest the greater evil should befall the Church, of the work of the ministry being neglected altogether. In the same way, at the dawn of the Reformation in Europe, the Church in most countries was reduced to such a state of weakness and helplessness amidst the universal darkness of the people, and the very general ignorance of the clergy, that liturgies or set forms of prayer were not only lawful,

about the lawfulness of set forms prescribed,' I must tell you 'this great controversy' upon it is raised only by yourselves (the five dissenting brethren in the Westminster Assembly) and the Brownists; there being no divines, and no Reformed Churches that I know of, but do allow the lawful use of set forms of prayer, composed and framed by others—as by Synods and Assemblies—and do make use of such sometimes, as the Churches of France and Holland in the administration of sacraments usually do; and those who practise them not so much, yet at least hold them lawful. And I challenge you in all your reading to name one divine of note, and orthodox, that ever held set forms of prayer prescribed unlawful, excepting only Independents."—Edwards, *Antapologia*, Lond. 1644, pp. 98–102.]

[1] [See, for instance, the references given by Clarkson, *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, p. 196.]

but the introduction of them was expedient, if not absolutely necessary. This state of matters in the case of Churches emerging from the corruption and darkness of Popery is sufficient to account for and to warrant the partial countenance given in the emergency to set compositions and forms of prayer by some of the Reformers, both in this country and on the Continent. There cannot be a doubt that, in the deplorable state in which the Church of England was at the date of the Reformation, the introduction of forms both of prayer and preaching among the ministry was a thing not to be condemned, but approved of at the time; and that the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Homilies prescribed by authority to its ministers were a benefit, and not the reverse. Neither the gifts necessary for prayer, nor the endowments necessary for preaching, were in the circumstances very common things among the clergy; and the introduction of set forms for both was a necessity which carried its own warrant with it. The Church's "poverty, if not her will, consented." In the general debate, then, on the subject of liturgies, it cannot be maintained that they are unlawful for the Church in all circumstances and on all occasions.

These *four* concessions or explanations it is important and necessary to make, in order that we may clear the way to a right understanding of the point in dispute between the friends and opponents of liturgies. In denying the right of the Church, in the exercise of its powers in connection with public worship, to impose liturgies, or fixed forms of prayer, by its authority over congregations and ministers, we do not deny that a form of words is not only lawful, but necessary, in social or public prayer. We do not deny that it is lawful, and, if circumstances should make it advantageous for one party or other, that it may be expedient, for ministers, in conducting the devotions of public assemblies, to premeditate or precompose their prayers. We do not deny that it is lawful for ministers, in officiating in public worship, to employ inspired forms, whether for praise or prayer, following in whole or in part the language of Scripture. Finally, we do not deny, in respect even to human compositions of prayer or formal liturgies, that in certain emergencies of the Church, and to satisfy a temporary demand, it may become necessary to make use of forms of prayer as helps to ministers and people, and that the necessity for the practice carries with it its own justification. But having made these explanations, the real question in contro-

versy still remains, as to the lawfulness of liturgies in the strict sense of the word, or of fixed forms of prayer, imposed by ecclesiastical authority in the stated and ordinary worship of God. There are three elements included in the notion of such human impositions in the ordinary worship of God. *First*, we have a scheme of precomposed and fixed forms of prayer for the ordinary worship of the Church at all times. *Second*, we have these used alone, and to the exclusion of the possibility of free and extempore prayer. And *third*, we have the stated use of liturgies, to the exclusion of other forms of prayer, imposed as binding by ecclesiastical authority, under the penalty of forfeiting, by declinature of them, the privilege of Church fellowship. These three things are included in the notion of a prescribed liturgy as statedly used in the Church. The stated and universal use of such forms of prayer, the exclusion as unlawful of any other, and the imposition of them by ecclesiastical authority, are properly implied in the principle of liturgies prescribed by the Church.[1]

Now it is not difficult to bring the question, as now stated and explained, to the test of reason and Scripture. Liturgies as so enforced and employed can be defended only on one or other of two grounds: either on the ground that they belong to the circumstances of worship, as essential to the administration of it according to decency and order,—in which case they fall within the province of natural reason to impose them; or that they belong to worship itself, as essential to its completeness and

[1] "Our author," says Dr. M'Crie, in his able review of Mr. Simeon's work, *On the Excellency of the Liturgy*, "speaks of 'the use of a form of prayer,' of 'a precomposed prayer;' and he seems to think that he will have vindicated his Church, provided he prove that it is not unlawful to pray in a form of words, or in a form that has been precomposed. But we must inform him that we can grant all this, and yet insist that the practice of the English Church respecting this part of Divine service is unlawful, inexpedient, and unacceptable to God. The proper question is: Is it lawful and expedient to have set forms of prayer for every part of the public service of God, the use of which shall be authoritatively *imposed* upon all the ministers of the Church, and which they shall be bound to *repeat invariably* on the same days of every recurring year, without the slightest diminution, addition, or alteration? The Church of England says that it shall be so within the whole of her extensive pale; so it has been for upwards of two centuries and a half; and because they could not submit to this, thousands of serious persons have been subjected to great hardships and sufferings, and myriads have been driven from her communion. And we affirm that no arrangement similar to this is to be found in the history either of the Jewish Church, or of the Christian Church during at least the first five centuries."—*Miscell. Works*, Edin. 1841, p. 210. Robinson, *Case of Liturgies*, Lond. 1710, pp. 19–25.

spiritual effect,—in which case they must be appointments of Christ, warranted and authorized in His Word. It is not very easy, I think, to defend the principle of liturgies, or fixed forms of prayer imposed by the authority of the Church, on either ground.

1*st*. Are liturgies enforced by authority of the Church essential to the decency and order of Divine worship, in such a sense that without them the service of God must be chargeable with indecency and confusion?

It is hardly necessary, I think, to answer the question. There are some indeed of the very High Churchmen, who, in defending the use of liturgies, do so upon this principle, and who apply to them the apostolic canon by which Paul sought to put down the jargon of unknown tongues and the immodesty of female speaking which had obtained in the Church of Corinth. They hold that the absence of a stated form of prayer in worship is no less contrary to the requirements of decency and order than were the scandalous proceedings rebuked by the apostle, and that without it the service of God must be indecent and disorderly. It is not needful to argue against such an assumption. If public and prescribed forms of prayer are to be judged of by the apostolic canon, there is much more reason to assert that the unvarying use of them by ministers and congregations, without any power in either to alter or depart from them as change of circumstances may demand, is opposed to the spirit, if not the letter, of Paul's rule announced to the Corinthian Church. That ministers should be bound, by an authority that admits of no latitude of discretion, to use one fixed and stereotyped form of prayer to the exclusion of any change or modification of it, however much circumstances may alter, and however inapplicable it may be to the present position of minister or congregation; that there should be no liberty allowed to adapt the prayer to the emergency, whether as regards the occurrence of new events or new feelings in the congregation demanding to be had regard to; this is an imposition which may in certain conjunctures, easily to be conceived, lead to something very like indecency. If the prayers offered up to God, in consequence of their being fixed by authority, cannot be so altered or adapted as to express the present feelings and desires of the people in the emergency,—if the language of the fixed and unalterable form utter to God one thing, while the language of the heart would express another,—

the inconsistency can hardly in many cases be accounted to be less than indecent. Or if the prayers fixed and prescribed by authority shall still more palpably, if not more really, run counter to the circumstances that may have occurred or changed since their prescription, so as to exhibit a marked and outward variance or contrast between the language and the fact, the inconsistency here may exhibit another example of disregard to the apostolic canon respecting decency and order. It is not difficult to conceive of such occurrences. Nay, such occurrences have already happened repeatedly, exhibiting in a manner all too palpable, that so far from the absence of fixed forms of prayer being indecent, the use of them may in certain emergencies become eminently so. "When," says Anderson, in his *Defence of Presbyterian Church Government, Faith, and Worship*, "when the Prince of Orange landed in England in 1688, it was very well known the body of the English clergy favoured his attempt; yet for several months after, they were not only obliged in law, but actually did pray for King James, begging, in the words of the Liturgy, 'that God would confound the devices of his enemies.' Once more: when Prince George of Denmark, Her Majesty's husband, was dead, the clergy continued as formerly to pray for issue to Her Majesty, till that clause of the Liturgy was discharged by an order of the Council. This is no secret, for we had it in the public newsprints. Were these petitions," continues Anderson, "either reasonable or decent?"[1]

2*d*. If liturgies imposed by ecclesiastical authority cannot be defended on the ground that they are essential to the decency and order of Church worship, are they warranted on the ground that they form part of that worship itself, sanctioned by the authority of Christ in His Word?

I have already had occasion more than once to advert to the limits that are set to the power of the Church in matters of worship; and if we now in the briefest manner apply the principles which form these limits to the case of the imposition of liturgies by ecclesiastical authority, we shall find that such imposition is unauthorized and unlawful.

In the first place, the limitation affixed to the exercise of Church power by the Word of God as its rule, forbids the

[1] Anderson of Dumbarton, *Defence of the Church Government, Faith, Worship, and Spirit of Presbyterians* (1st ed. 1714), Edin. 1820, p. 306.

imposition of liturgies as a standing and ordinary part of worship, to the exclusion of free prayer. The only question here is: Are such liturgies countenanced by Scripture? The Scripture argument in connection with this controversy lies within a very narrow compass indeed. There is hardly even the shadow of a ground for alleging that there is the slightest countenance given either in the Old or New Testament to the use or obligation of set forms of prayer,—far less to the use and obligation of them to the exclusion of every other kind of prayer. What is the Scripture testimony to the practice of the Jewish Church? The whole of it may be summed up in a single sentence. We know that they had synagogues and stated assemblies of the people for worship on the Sabbath-days. That worship included, as we learn from the book of Nehemiah, the reading in the book of the law of God day by day on the solemn feasts; and as we learn from the Apostle James in the Acts, "Moses was read in the synagogue every Sabbath-day." In addition to the reading of the Word, there was also the preaching of it. "The Levites," we are told, "caused the people to understand the law; and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." And the Apostle James, in the same passage in the Acts, declares "that Moses of old time had in every city them that preach him."[1] Further still, in addition to the reading and preaching of the Word, they employed the singing of psalms as part of the ordinary public worship; for we are told that the Levites "were appointed to stand every morning, and likewise in the evening, to thank and praise the Lord."[2] Once more, we may certainly infer that prayer was included in the ordinary services of the Jewish synagogues, both from its being a duty proper to worship, and also from the fact that in the passage in Nehemiah already referred to, Ezra is represented as joining in prayer with the people, before proceeding to read or expound the Scripture: "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground."[3] And in another place we are told that "Mattaniah

[1] Neh. viii. 2–8, 13, 18, ix. 2, 3; Acts xv. 21, comp. Luke iv. 16–22; Acts xiii. 14, 15.

[2] 1 Chron. xxiii. 30; 2 Chron. xxix. 30; Neh. xii. 45–47.

[3] Neh. viii. 6, xi. 17; 1 Kings viii. 38; Isa. lvi. 7.

of the sons of Asaph was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer." This is almost the whole of the testimony of Scripture in regard to the public worship of the Jews in their synagogues. And there is not the slightest ground for alleging, as the friends of liturgies have sometimes done, that it countenances set forms of prayer. I say nothing of the alleged evidence in favour of set forms of prayer in the Jewish worship derived from the Talmud, because that compilation can be of no authority in a question of this nature in the absence of Scripture proof; and because it is chiefly made up of the unauthorized traditions which the Jews had added to the commandments of God.[1]

Again, what is the Scripture testimony to the conduct or commands of our Lord Himself in regard to liturgies or set forms of prayer? The fact that our Lord joined in communion with the Jewish Church during at least a portion of the time He was on earth, and was accustomed to be present at its worship, has been alleged by the advocates of liturgies, in favour of the idea that He gave His countenance to set forms of prayer,—an argument which will be entitled to consideration and reply when it is first proved that the Jewish worship included fixed forms of prayer, but not until then. The additional fact, that our Saviour taught His disciples to pray, and instructed them in the form commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, is constantly quoted by the upholders of liturgies as giving countenance to their doctrine. Such an argument is one of those that prove nothing, by proving a great deal too much. If our Lord's expression addressed to His disciples as given in Matthew, "After this manner (οὕτως) pray ye;" or as in Luke, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,"[2]—if that expression is to be understood as a command to pray in these words and no other, then the argument proves a great deal too much, as it must necessarily exclude as forbidden any other form of prayer whatsoever, and render every other liturgy but itself unlawful. And if not so to be understood, it seems plainly to follow—what indeed is obvious on other grounds—that the Lord's Prayer was given as a pattern of the manner of prayer, and not as

[1] Vitringa, *De Synagogâ Vetere*, Francqueræ 1696, tom. i. pars ii. cap. xii.; tom. ii. pars ii. cap. xi.–xx. Robinson, *Case of Liturgies*, Lond. 1710, pp. 49–76. [Nitzsch, *prot. Beant. der Symb. Möhlers*, Hamburg 1835, pp. 199 f., 204–206.]

[2] Matt. vi. 9; Luke xi. 2.

a binding form constantly to be employed, to the exclusion of every other.

Once more: what is the Scripture testimony to the example or injunctions of Christ's inspired apostles in reference to fixed forms of prayer? There is literally nothing to be gathered from their personal conduct or their official statements to others in favour of such forms, but very much the reverse. We meet with solemn and repeated exhortations to prayer, but we hear nothing of prayer after a written form; we find frequent examples in their own conduct of prayer, but not a word regarding prescribed liturgies: prayer at the dark hour of midnight, and amid the horrors and imprecations of the jail at Philippi; prayer with bended knees on the sea-shore, when the waves made music to their voices; but not prayer fettered and stinted by the page of a precomposed and written formula. Does Scripture, as the rule to limit the exercise of Church power, favour its use in the imposition of a fixed form of prayer? On the contrary, Scripture, rightly interpreted, forbids and excludes such forms.

In the second place, the limitation affixed to Church power by the authority of Christ, as the source of it, forbids the imposition of liturgies as a standing and ordinary part of Church worship, to the exclusion of free prayer. After what has already been said, it is unnecessary to do more than lay down this proposition. If Scripture, as the expressed will of Christ, discountenances the use of liturgies, it is plain that His authority as so expressed forbids them.

In the third place, the limitation affixed to Church power by a regard to the liberties and edification of Christ's people as its object, excludes the right of the Church to impose a fixed form of prayer, to the exclusion of free prayer. The imposition of such restraints upon free prayer by ecclesiastical authority touches very nearly the liberty of Christ's people, and that, too, in an aspect of it which they hold to be the most precious of all—the liberty of access to God at the mercy-seat. Both minister and people are equally deprived of the freedom which is their common right, of jointly expressing, in what words may suit best their condition, their mutual desires to God, their common confessions, their combined requests. A worshipping assembly joining together as one man, to utter through one mouth their common prayers to God, ought to have the freedom, which each individual

has, to frame, as best suits their wants and wishes, their petitions unto God. To deprive them of their privilege by imposing, to the exclusion of any discretion or latitude in the matter, prayers prepared for them by others, is to come between them and the throne of grace, and to shut up by human or ecclesiastical restriction the free and open way of access to it, purchased for sinners by the blood of Christ. No comprehensiveness in the language of prayer employed in liturgies will entirely do away with this objection. To bind down prescribed forms of prayer by authority on the consciences of the Christian members, however excellent these prayers may be, and to make unlawful the use of any other in Church worship, is no slight interference with the rights of conscience, and can be justified by no plea of the fulness or excellence of the formula. Even in those extreme cases when, from the ignorance or incapacity of the ministers, a Church might be justified in providing the help of forms of prayer rather than permit the work of the ministry to be left undone, such forms ought to be permissive and not compulsory,—open to be used by any, but not bound upon the conscience of all.[1] No ecclesiastical authority has a right to frame the petitions, confessions, and thanksgivings of the people for them, and to forbid them in any other language, or with any other prayers, to approach in public worship the footstool of the Almighty.

In the fourth place, the limitation affixed to ecclesiastical power by a regard to its nature, as exclusively spiritual, forbids the use of set forms of prayers, to the exclusion of every other kind. The worship of God is a part of His service that is essentially and pre-eminently spiritual; nor can there be any acceptable prayer at all which is not prompted and pervaded by the Holy Spirit. Any other is a mere formal service, a carnal ordinance, an empty and worthless homage. Prayer is but an outward and unspiritual act, when it is not dictated and inspired by the Intercessor within the soul. The Scriptures give us warrant to believe the marvellous fact, that the Holy Ghost is given to the believer in acceptable supplication to make intercession with the heart; to suggest the desires that rise up to God in acceptable worship;

[1] [This is a very marked and commendable feature in the Book of Common Order, sometimes, but incorrectly, styled John Knox's Liturgy. For some remarks by Dr. Bannerman upon this work—which is given in Dunlop's *Collection of Confessions*, etc. etc., vol. ii. pp. 383-514—see Appendix G.]

to help the infirmities both of feeling and expression of him that lifts up his heart with his hands to the mercy-seat; and to assist both the wishes and the utterance of prayer. I do not mean to deny that the free Spirit of God may be given, and is given, to those who use the precomposed forms of a liturgy in prayer; and that through the presence and power of the Spirit it may become, to those who use it aright, not a formal and outward, but a spiritual service. But in the use of prayers already dictated and expressed to their hands, it would seem to be impossible that ministers or people can be in a position leading them to such an entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for His help, as those must feel who without such forms seek to trust Him both for the materials and the manner of supplication.[1] And is there no danger that, in trusting to a precomposed form to suggest both the desires to be expressed, and the expression of them, and not rather seeking to rely on the promised aid of the Spirit for both, He may be tempted to withdraw that aid which is not sought as it might be? Is there no danger that prayer, limited to a prescribed form of words, and not linked to a simple and single dependence on the Spirit both for desires and words, may become a formal and unspiritual service,—an outward homage, and not an inward one? Such seems to be the peril to which prescribed forms of prayer, imposed to the exclusion of free prayer, unques-

[1] "For any one," says Bishop Wilkins, "so to sit down and satisfy himself with this book-prayer, or some prescript form, as to go no further, this were still to remain in his infancy, and not to grow up in his new nature. This would be as if a man who had once need of crutches, should always afterwards make use of them, and so necessitate himself to a perpetual impotence. It is the duty of every Christian to grow and increase in all the parts of Christianity, as well gifts as graces, to exercise and improve every holy gift, and not to stifle any of those abilities wherewith God hath endued them. Now, how can a man be said to live suitably to these rules, who does not put forth himself in some attempts and endeavours of this kind? And then, besides, how can such a man suit his desires unto several emergencies? What one says of counsel to be had from books, may be fitly applied to this prayer by book, that it is commonly of itself something flat and dead, floating for the most part too much in generalities, and not particular enough for each several occasion. There is not that life and vigour in it to engage the affections, as when it proceeds immediately from the soul itself, and is the natural expression of those particulars whereof we are most sensible. And if it be a fault not to strive and labour after this gift, much more is it to jeer and despise it by the name of 'extempore prayer,' and 'praying by the Spirit;' which expressions, as they are frequently used by way of reproach, are for the most part a sign of a profane heart, and of such as are altogether strangers to the power and comfort of this duty."—*Gift of Prayer*, 8th ed. pp. 9, 10.

tionably expose those who submit to them. There may be the outward form without the indwelling Spirit,—the eloquence of words without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost,—incense offered to the Lord in the very censers that are His, but not kindled with a kindling taken from His altar,—strange fire, which, although offered as an offering to God, is yet an abomination in His sight.[1]

[1] Owen, *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, Works, Goold's ed. vol. xv. pp. 1–55. Clarkson, *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, Lond. 1689. Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. ii. tract. i. cap. i. ii.; tract. ii. cap. i. Milton, *Prose Works*, Lond. 1753, vol. i. pp. 85–89, 135–138. Robinson, *Review of the Case of Liturgies, and their Imposition*, Lond. 1710. *Antiquity and Pedigree of Liturgies*, by H. D. M. A., Lond. 1661. Rule, *Good Old Way Defended*, Edin. 1697. pp. 295–303. Anderson, *Defence of the Church Gov., etc., of Presbyterians*, Edin. 1820. pp. 266–309. Sir Peter King, *Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church*, Part ii. Lond. 1719. pp. 4–42. Calderwood, *Altar of Damascus*, 1621, pp. 190–202; and the additional remarks on the same subject in the Latin ed. *Altare Damascenum*, 1623. *Plea of Presbytery*, Glasgow 1840, pp. 457–547. M'Crie, *Miscell. Works*, Edin. 1841, pp. 204–221.

SUBDIVISION II.

THE TIME FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

WE have now brought to a close our argument on the subject of Church power in reference to public worship viewed generally. Following out the order of discussion already indicated, we have next to consider the question of when and how often public worship is statedly to be celebrated. If public worship be a standing ordinance in the Church, and a perpetual duty binding on its members, it necessarily follows that a certain proportion of time must be specially set apart and employed in the observance of it. Apart altogether from any positive appointment in the matter, it is the office of natural reason, when it teaches men the duty of worship, to teach them at the same time to give a certain portion of their time to the discharge of the duty. *What* proportion of time is to be so employed, and *when* the season for the duty is to recur, are questions which natural reason may be unable distinctly to answer. But the light of nature itself dictates the necessity of setting apart a certain proportion of time for the worship of God,—founded as the duty of worship is in the necessary relation subsisting between the creature and the Creator.

But while natural reason dictates the duty of employing a certain proportion of our time in the worship of God, the question of *when* and *how often* the duty is to be discharged is one that belongs to God to determine. The length of time to be set apart for the duty, and the frequency of its return, are matters of positive appointment connected with His own worship, which,

like other positive provisions for it, remain for God and not for man to dictate. We believe that the precise length of time to be set apart for ordinary worship, and also the interval between the recurrence of such seasons, have been fixed by God in that septenary division of time which He instituted for man in the beginning, and in the arbitrary singling out of one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath unto Himself. In the institution of the Sabbath there was an arbitrary appointment of God grafted upon a natural duty; and hence the ordinance itself partakes of the character both of a moral and of a positive duty.[1] It is of considerable importance in the argument, to distinguish clearly what belongs to it in the one character, and what belongs to it in the other. In so far as it recognises and embodies the obligation of devoting our time, more or less in amount, and at more or less frequent intervals, to the worship of God, it is a duty which the law of nature, apart from any positive appointment, enjoins. In so far as it defines this obligation as the duty to devote one whole day in seven, and a particular day in the week as the Sabbath, to the purposes of devotion, it must be regarded as a positive institution superinduced upon a natural one. The duty of setting apart *some* portion or other of our time to the worship of God, is a duty founded in the relation of a creature to his Creator, as much as the obligation of worship itself, and not to be set aside or changed any more than you could set aside or change that relation. The duty, on the other hand, of setting apart a *seventh* and not a sixth portion of the week, and fixing its return on the first or last day of the seven, rather than any other, is an appointment of a positive kind, determined by God on good and sufficient principles connected with the circumstances of man, but yet principles which, in so far as we know, might in other circumstances have led to another determination. In so far as it is a moral duty, founded on the very nature of man as God's creature, and demanding *some* proportion of his time to be employed in worship, it could not be altered. In so far as it is a positive duty, founded in the circumstances of man, and demanding the *seventh* portion of the week, and the first or last day of it to be so employed, it

[1] A *moral* duty is one founded on grounds which are permanent, universally binding in themselves, and by their very nature unalterable. A *positive* duty is one the grounds of which are of a temporary character, not universally binding unless by special command, and in their nature alterable. See Owen, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xix. pp. 328–330.

might, in so far as we can understand, have been different from what it is.[1]

The time, then, to be specially dedicated to Divine service, like some of the other provisions for worship, has something in it of a natural institution; and, like all the other provisions of worship, it has something in it also of a positive ordinance. Is the time thus set apart by arbitrary appointment of God for His worship designed to be a standing and perpetual institution in His Church—an ordinance of permanent and universal obligation? Is the Sabbath the exclusive appointment made by God as to the times and seasons of worship; or are there other days also binding on the conscience and obedience of the members of the Church? What is the office of the Church in the exercise of the power committed to it in regard to the time for public worship? These questions it is deeply important for us to be enabled to answer; and to the consideration of them we are naturally brought at this point in the order of our discussions. We have found public worship to be a permanent ordinance of God in His Church. Is the Sabbath, or the time for public worship, no less an ordinance of Divine and permanent obligation? To this subject we shall direct our attention in the first place. Is the Sabbath the *only* day set apart by God for His ordinary worship, and the *only* day which the Church has a right to ordain the observance of for that end? or are there other days also holy, and also to be set apart by the Church as stated and ordinary seasons for worship? To the consideration of this further subject we shall address ourselves in the second place.

In proceeding to consider the question of the Divine and permanent obligation of the Sabbath as the season set apart for worship, it is impossible for us to do more than state in the briefest possible manner the heads of argument in the discussion. To attempt to go further in such a wide and varied field, would be utterly inconsistent with the limits prescribed to us. All that we can do is, to lay down a few leading principles of a general nature applicable to the subject.

I. That the institution of the Sabbath had no reference to any temporary purpose or any special people, but was founded on a reason or ground of permanent and universal obligation, is manifest from the nature and circumstances of its appointment at first.

[1] Owen, *ut supra*, pp. 330–365.

The Sabbath, as at first enjoined on man, was no part of a temporary or local economy. It was on man in the catholic and unalterable character of God's creature, and not on man as Jew or Gentile, as the subject of a limited and transient dispensation, that the day of weekly rest was enjoined. Time, as forming a portion of the existence of the Eternal God, was all equally and alike holy to Him; time, as forming a portion of the days of the lifetime of unfallen man, was all equally and alike good to him for the purpose of worshipping His Creator. And when *one* particular day in the week, viewing it as a brief part of the everlasting existence of God, was singled out by God Himself that He might bless and sanctify it, and Himself rest on that day from His work of creation; when the same day, viewing it as a season in the earthly existence of man, was made in this manner holy and blessed to him; it was an ordinance in which not the Jews only, but all mankind, are equally interested,—an ordinance to man as the rational and moral creature of God, and not as the subject of any local or temporary obligation. A Sabbath so instituted had no connection with any peculiar economy, under which a portion of the human race afterwards came to be placed; but plainly belonged to that relationship into which man, as the creature of God, fresh from His almighty hand, entered in the hour of his creation. There were, indeed, two great laws given to man at first, fundamental and appropriate to the twofold relation into which at his creation he was introduced; the *first* bearing on his relation to God, the *second* on his relation to his fellows of the same race. At the creation man entered into relation with God as his Maker,—the relation of creatureship, to endure unaltered throughout every generation of the creature; and as fundamental and appropriate to that connection, God appointed the ordinance of the seventh day of worship as the very condition on which it was to subsist and be maintained. At the creation also man entered for the first time into relationship with his fellow-creature of the same race,—a relationship also destined to endure throughout all the changes and dispensations appointed for man as a social being; and as fundamental and appropriate to this connection, God ordained the law of marriage as the basis of all the subsequent intercourse of man with man. The one as lying at the foundation of all his relations with God, and the other as lying at the foundation of all his relations with his fellow-men,

were alike laws appointed for him as man, and appropriate and essential to him in his twofold capacity as destined to hold intercourse with God, and as destined to hold intercourse with his fellow-men. The law of the Sabbath not less than the law of marriage was given to *man*, and not to any race or period of men; and coeval with man's entrance into being, they are destined to endure and be binding while he has his existence on the earth.

There is no possibility of getting rid of this argument for the Divine and permanent obligation of the Sabbath, except either by denying the credibility and authenticity of the narrative of its institution in Genesis, or else by interpreting it so as to warrant the conclusion that it was appointed not at the creation, but subsequently to the Israelites in the wilderness. With those who deny the historical veracity of the book of Genesis this is not the place to enter into any argument. With those, again, who, like Paley, hold that the narrative of Genesis, admitted to be authentic and credible, is not to be interpreted as if it recorded the first institution of the Sabbath, but only as speaking of it by anticipation; and that the first appointment of the law of the Sabbath is really recorded in Exodus, in connection with the gathering of the manna by the Israelites in the desert; with this second class of objectors a very brief argument is all that is necessary. *In the first place*, unless extreme violence is to be done to the express statements of Genesis, it must be admitted that it is not in the way of anticipating an event to take place two thousand years afterwards, but in the way of recording an event occurring at the moment, that it speaks of God blessing and sanctifying and resting on the seventh day after the six previous days of creation. In the *second place*, the narrative in Exodus which speaks of the Israelites gathering a double portion of the manna on the sixth day, and none on the seventh, cannot, on any sound or sober principles of interpretation, be regarded in any other light than as a reference to the Sabbath, not as an institution then for the first time appointed, but rather as an ordinance well known and familiar. *In the third place*, the promulgation of the law at Sinai, embodying as it did the sabbatical ordinance, seems to imply the previous acquaintance of the Israelites with the appointment. And *in the fourth place*, the division of time into weeks of seven days, prevalent long before among the patriarchs, seems no less to point to the previous

existence of the Sabbath as the seventh day rest.[1] Such considerations as these seem distinctly to demonstrate that the narrative of Genesis as to the appointment of the Sabbath is not the history of an event which did not take place until hundreds of years afterwards, but the history of an event which took place at the creation.[2] And if so, there is no way of escape from the conclusion, that the Sabbath appointed to man in the beginning had no connection with any temporary or local dispensation, but was given to man as the creature of God, to be the fundamental law of his worship; and that as such it is an ordinance binding upon men in every age, and under all the circumstances and changes of their being on earth.

II. That the ordinance of the Sabbath is one of universal and everlasting obligation, may be evinced from the place assigned to that ordinance in the moral law, reasserted and promulgated afresh at Sinai.

That the moral law embodied in the Ten Commandments was totally distinct from the political and ceremonial law appointed for the Israelites, is abundantly obvious. The one, as the law of right and wrong—as the expression of that unchangeable obligation which lies upon every human creature at all times—had been in force from the beginning, and was destined to continue in force to the end; the other, as embodying the political and ritual observances characteristic of Israel as a nation or Church, and intended to serve a temporary purpose until a better dispensation was brought in, had not previously any authority, and was designed to give place to the Gospel. Between these two laws there was a broad and indelible line of distinction, marking out the one as of local and temporary, the other as of universal and permanent obligation. There are four marks that may be mentioned as separating between the moral law of the Ten Commandments, of universal and perpetual authority, and the ceremonial and political law of the Israelites, of limited and local obligation.

1*st*. The manner of the promulgation of the Ten Commandments at Sinai indicated a difference between them and the ceremonial appointments of Israel. They were uttered by the voice of God Himself amid the most sublime indications of the

[1] Gen. iv. 3, vii. 4, 10, viii. 10, 12, l. 10; Ex. xii. 7.
[2] Owen, *ut supra*, pp. 287–326.

presence and supremacy of Jehovah, in the hearing of all Israel, who trembled exceedingly as God spake to them all the words of His law. They were addressed directly to the people, not conveyed to them indirectly through Moses. They were graven by the finger of God Himself on the tables of stone. "*These words*," said Moses to the people, after solemnly rehearsing to them the Ten Commandments shortly before his death, "*these words* the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; *and He added no more:* and He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me."[1] None of these things can be said of any of the ceremonial or political commandments given to Israel. These latter were communicated to Moses personally, and written by him in a book. It cannot be doubted that, in an age when truth was so much taught by signs and significant actions, the striking difference in the manner of their promulgation was designed by God to call the attention of the Israelites to the still more striking difference between the laws themselves: the one being of everlasting and universal authority; the other being only local and temporary in its obligation.

2*d*. The manner of the preservation of the Ten Commandments, no less than that of their promulgation, indicated the marked and solemn difference put between them and the ceremonial and political laws of the Israelites. They were deposited, as the only possession it held,[2] in the ark of the covenant; that ark with its contents was placed within the veil, in the holiest of all; to look into the ark where the law was contained, was, as the men of Bethshemesh found,[3] visited with death; day by day the mercy-seat over the ark was wet and sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices; and above the mercy-seat, guarding the law beneath, was the cloud of Divine glory that indicated the presence of Jehovah.[4] In all these jealous and peculiar precautions employed about the preservation of the law of the Ten Commandments, it is not difficult to read the lesson of the deep and indelible distinction drawn between it and the ceremonial commandments of the Jews. Was it, after having been once broken

[1] Deut. v. 22, x. 1–5.
[2] Ex. xxv. 21, xl. 20; 1 Kings viii. 9.
[3] 1 Sam. vi. 19; 1 Chron. xiii. 9, 10.
[4] Ex. xxv. 16–22; Lev. xvi. 2–17; Num. vii. 89.

at the hands of man and written afresh by the finger of God,[1] withdrawn from human eye, shut up in the ark of the covenant under the peril of death to him who should look upon it, and placed within the most holy place, to which none but the high priest once a year found entrance? This was indeed the high and holy law of God, which men had once broken; which never was again to be intrusted to sinners as a means of life, but to be withdrawn from their sight because they were unworthy to look upon it, and reserved only until a better man might be found to keep it and make it honourable. Were the ark and the mercy-seat over the law day by day moistened and sprinkled with the shed blood of the sacrifices offered continually? It was the law of God, whose inviolable holiness and unsullied justice still demanded blood because of the transgression of it, and waited until the hour when more than mortal blood, so long typically shed, was actually to be poured out in vindication of its claims. Did the living and burning glory of Jehovah keep watch above the spot where that law was deposited? It was the law of the Lord, whose unalterable and everlasting authority was guarded and sanctioned by all His perfections. In the significant circumstances that marked its preservation, we read the truth of the wide and essential distinction between the law of the Ten Commandments and the political and ceremonial commandments of Israel.[2]

3*d*. The manner of the vindication of the law contained in the Ten Commandments demonstrates the difference between that law and the ceremonial ordinances of the Jews. Christ came in the fulness of time to abolish the one, and to evince their utter vanity; Christ came in the fulness of time to obey and confirm and vindicate the other. The very same revelation of the Son of God in the flesh to set up a kingdom and a Church that cannot be moved, which demonstrated that the one set of laws were temporary and limited in their force, and neither designed nor fitted to be permanent or universal, served at the same time to demonstrate that the other set of laws were of perpetual and unalterable obligation, eternally binding in their substance on all moral and intelligent beings. The ceremonial laws of the Jews were promulgated, observed, and obeyed throughout the

[1] Ex. xxxiv. 1; Deut. x. 1–4.

[2] Owen, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xix. pp. 366–370. Willison, *Practical Works*, Hetherington's ed. pp. 13–16.

nation; serving, until the manifestation of Christ, the local and temporary purpose of types pointing to the introduction of a future and higher economy by which they were to be displaced. The moral law, embodied in the Ten Commandments, was laid up in hiding within the ark, as no longer to be promulgated for man to keep as the means of life to his soul, but waiting there until the day came when their hiding-place was to be laid open, and the veil that concealed them rent in twain, and when they themselves should be brought forth to be fulfilled and vindicated and honoured by the obedience and death of the Son of God. That death did virtually abolish and put dishonour upon the ritual and carnal commandments of a worn-out and bygone dispensation. It no less confirmed and magnified the law of the Ten Commandments, as a law that could not be altered or abolished, even although the Son of God should die to fulfil it.

4th. The very nature of the law of the Ten Commandments, and the reasons out of which that law originated, demonstrate the difference between it and the ceremonial and temporary commandments given to Israel. This is not less obviously the case with the reasons given for the law of the Sabbath as in the case of the rest; and it is with the Sabbath ordinance that we have at present to do. The reasons rising out of the nature of the institution, by which its obligation is enforced, are such as to be in no respect peculiar to any one time or any one nation, but, on the contrary, reasons adapted to all times and all nations. The threefold reason given for the observance of the seventh day's rest in the fourth commandment is the very same as was given at the creation, and is adapted to man as man, the creature of God, wherever found, and under whatever dispensation. The example of God, or the Divine rest,—the "blessing the Sabbath," or making it a blessing to His creature,—the "hallowing it," or setting it apart to man for sacred purposes,—these are no limited and temporary reasons rendering the Sabbath-day binding on one nation, and not other branches of the human race, or making it of authority at one time and not at another.[1] They plainly point to a universal permanent obligation, such as the

[1] Gen. ii. 3; Ex. xx. 11. [Compare the additional reason given in Deut. v. 15 for the Israelites, as such, keeping the Sabbath. See also Owen, *ut supra*, pp. 294–298; and with reference to Col. ii. 16, 17, "Let no man judge you in respect of the Sabbath-days," pp. 382 f., 398–403.]

nature or reasons of the ceremonial observance of Israel could not indicate. Such marks of distinction as these between the institution of the Ten Commandments and the institution of Judaical observances, sufficiently demonstrate that the moral law of the former is of general and permanent authority, while the ceremonial law of the latter was meant to be local and temporary in its obligation.[1]

III. That the ordinance of the Sabbath was designed to be of perpetual obligation is demonstrated by statements of Scripture, which expressly intimate the continuance of the ordinance after the Jewish Sabbath was abolished.

In the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, for example, the prophet is prophesying of Gospel times, when the merely Jewish Sabbath should be no longer in force; and yet he speaks with marked and repeated emphasis of the blessing upon the man who should "keep the Sabbath from polluting it,"[2]—language which can have no meaning at all except in reference to the Christian Sabbath which was to succeed the Jewish. In like manner, our Lord speaks of the observance of the Sabbath as still to be kept up at a time when all mere Jewish institutions were abrogated and no longer binding. "Pray ye," says He in speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was to take place forty years after the rites of the Jewish Church were done away with; "pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day." The language of our Lord in this passage very obviously implies, that just as certainly as there would be winter, so certainly there would be a Sabbath at that time; and that it was a blessing to be entreated for, that the Christians might not

[1] ["Some say that the fourth command is perpetual, but not in its literal sense; not as designing any particular portion of time to be set apart and devoted to literal rest and religious exercise. They say that it stands in force only in a mystical sense, viz. as that weekly rest of the Jews typified rest in the Christian Church; and that we under the gospel are not to make any distinction of one day from another, but are to keep all time holy, doing everything in a spiritual manner. But this is an absurd way of interpreting the command, as it refers to Christians. For if the command be so far abolished, it is entirely abolished. For it is the very design of the command to fix the *time* of worship. The first command fixes the object, the second the means, the third the manner, the fourth the time. And if it stands in force now only as signifying a spiritual, Christian rest, and holy behaviour at all times, it doth not remain as one of the ten commands, but as a summary of all the commands."—President Edwards, *Works*, London 1834, vol. ii. p. 95.]

[2] Isa. lvi. 2, lviii. 13.

be forced to flee during the inclemency of the one season or during the sacredness of the other.

IV. The weekly Sabbath, or season for worship, has, since the resurrection of Christ, been transferred from the last to the first day of the week.

There are two sources of evidence from which the argument for this change is drawn:—1. There are very significant indications in the Old Testament Scriptures of such a change being intended. The Jewish Sabbath was the seventh day from the beginning of the work of creation by God; and the Christian Sabbath, now substituted in its place, is the following day, or the eighth, counting from the same commencement. Now it is a very striking and interesting fact, illustrated by a vast variety of different passages in the Old Testament Scriptures, that there are distinct intimations of the intention of God to exalt the eighth day above the seventh, and to transfer the honour which the seventh had attained among the days of the week to the eighth, or the following day. It is impossible, without a very ample quotation of passages, to give anything like an adequate idea of the force of the evidence for the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week, derived from those typical and prophetic intimations of the intention of God in Gospel days to prefer the eighth day above the seventh, and to signalize the day of Christ's resurrection, when He entered into rest, above the day of His own finishing of the work of creation, when He Himself entered into rest. The evidence is given in much detail, and with great effect, in the late Mr. Robert Haldane's Dissertation on the Sanctification of the Sabbath. One or two examples taken from his work may suffice. The rite of circumcision was to be administered to children only on the *eighth* day. This was a standing ordinance in the Jewish Church. But we know that circumcision was "the seal of the righteousness of faith,"—the everlasting righteousness to be accomplished and brought in by Christ.[1] That righteousness was actually brought in on the eighth day, or the day of Christ's resurrection; and the sign of circumcision in the Jewish Church long pointed out the very day when the type was to be fulfilled. Again, on the *eighth* day of their age animals were to be accepted in sacrifice,—plainly pointing to that day, honoured above all the rest, when in His resurrection Christ

[1] Rom. iv. 11; Dan. ix. 24.

was publicly accepted as the sacrifice of His people. Yet, again, on the *eighth* day the consecration of the High Priest in the Jewish Church was completed,—another token of the honour to be put on that day when the High Priest of His people arose from the dead, and was consecrated for evermore. Still further, it was on the *eighth* day the cleansing of the leprosy took place,—another sign still, pointing to the preference to be given to the day when Christ finished His atoning work, and cleansed His people from their sin. Once more, it was not until the *eighth* day that the first-born of cattle which belonged to the Lord were given to Him,—another indication of the mysterious honour awaiting that day of the week when "the first-born from the dead" was received by His Father.

In short, through the whole typical system and the prophetical Scriptures, the recurrence of the number *eight*, in connection with some mysterious preference to be given to it in that coming dispensation, in which all the types and prophecies were to find their fulfilment, is most frequent and marked. It is hardly possible to adopt any kind of interpretation which will not refer this to the day of Christ's resurrection, and which does not see in it a foreshadowing of the superior honour about to be put in Gospel days on the eighth day above the seventh. That this could refer to nothing except the honour which the seventh had so long enjoyed as the Sabbath of the Lord, seems to be very obvious; and the conclusion appears to be unavoidable, that there is a studied exhibition in type and prophecy throughout the whole of the ancient economy of the great truth that the seventh day, in the fulness of time, was to yield its place and its honours to the eighth, and that the Sabbath was to be transferred from the one to the other. They all point to the introduction on earth of a more glorious exhibition of the Divine character in connection with redemption than any connected with creation; and they indicate that the seventh day, so long linked to the remembrance of creation, was to yield its honours to the eighth day, as linked with the memory of redemption.

2. The change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week is demonstrated by Scripture examples. That there is no precept expressly appointing the change, and enjoining the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, is freely admitted. But it is a general principle, which cannot be

denied, that Scripture example in regard to any duty, when it is the example of inspired men, and not referable to their extraordinary office or character, is as binding as Scripture precept. And that we have such examples in the New Testament, sufficient to demonstrate the authoritative change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week, must be apparent to every attentive reader of it. We have the example of Christ, in His repeated and solemn appearances to His assembled disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week; we have the stated meeting of the Churches under inspired and apostolic direction on the same day; we have the weekly contributions made by the congregations assembled on the first day of the week; we have the distinguishing name given to it of the Lord's day. All this is sufficient to establish a Scripture precedent for the change of the day, of equal authority with an express injunction.[1]

V. The permanent and perpetual obligation of the Sabbatic ordinance is not affected by the change of the day on which it is observed.

Were we not able to prove that a change in the particular day for the observance of the Sabbath was intended and authorized, the only effect of this want of proof would be, not to exempt us from the keeping of a Sabbath, but to throw us back on the last day of the week as the season for its observance. But there is abundant proof, from inspired and authoritative example, for the change; and that change does not in the least affect the perpetuity of the ordinance. It is a change in what belongs to the Sabbath as a positive ordinance, and not in what belongs to it as a moral duty. That a certain portion of our time, more or less, is to be set apart for the worship of God, is one of those duties dictated by a consideration of the very relation in which as creatures we stand to God; and in this respect we could not conceive of the ordinance being changed. But that the last day of the week instead of any other day should be appointed for worship, is a matter of positive institution not affecting the essence of the ordinance any more than the positive law which at one time made death the penalty of a breach of the fourth commandment in Israel, and which "the Lord of the Sabbath" may alter for sufficient reason, without affecting the permanence or the perpetual obligation of the institution. That such a sufficient reason has occurred

[1] Edwards, *ut supra*, pp. 96–100. Willison, *Practical Works*, pp. 17–24.

in the superior glory of the finished work of Christ over that of creation to justify and require the change, few men who understand what that work is will be disposed to deny.

There are three Sabbaths referred to in Scripture, each excelling the other in glory as they occur in their order, because each one as it occurs comprehends, as it were, all the former. There is the Sabbath of creation, when God the Father rested from His work of power, and called upon man to enter with Him into rest, and to rejoice with Him in that finished work, because it was good. There is the Sabbath of redemption,—not superseding but embracing the former,—when God the Son rested from His work of grace, and once more invited man to enter with Him into rest, and rejoice with Him in the finished work, that, in a higher sense than in the former case, because it was creation restored, was also very good. And there is the Sabbath of glory yet to come, not superseding the former two, but embracing and comprehending both, when, creation restored and redemption completed, and both continued in glory, God the Spirit shall enter into His rest, and shall call upon His saints to rest with Him also, rejoicing together through eternity in the last and highest Sabbath of God.[1]

[1] On this subject, see especially Owen's learned and exhaustive treatment of the whole question of the Sabbath, in his *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews*; *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xix. pp. 264–460. A brief but very masterly discussion of it by Jonathan Edwards, will be found in his three Sermons on the Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath; *Works*, Lond. 1834, vol. ii. pp. 93–103. See also Willison of Dundee's Treatise concerning the Sanctification of the Lord's Day; *Practical Works*, pp. 1–126. Wardlaw, *Discourses on the Sabbath*, Glasgow 1832.

CHAPTER II.

ECCLESIASTICAL HOLIDAYS.

WE have had before us of late the subject of the one great distinction which has been drawn by God Himself between the times and seasons appointed for man on the earth,—the distinction, namely, between that one-seventh portion of the week which He made holy and set apart from the rest for the purpose of His own worship, and those six-sevenths of the week which He did not so sanctify or set apart, but gave to man for his ordinary uses. We believe that there is ample warrant in Scripture for saying that this distinction is not of human invention, but of God's positive command; that it was appointed at the creation as the fundamental law that was to regulate the intercourse of God and man; that it was dictated to men, not as the subjects of any peculiar or temporary dispensation, but as the creatures of God under all dispensations; that as such it is of permanent and universal obligation, destined to cease only with the existence of man on the earth; and that, even after his earthly existence is terminated, this Sabbath, suited to his present character here, shall be done away with, only because it shall be merged into the Sabbath of God in heaven.[1] In reference to the ordinance of the Sabbath as the time marked out by God Himself for worship, it is the office of the Church, just as in regard to every other Divine ordinance, simply to administer the appointment of its Divine Head, to accept of it in all its fulness, integrity, and simplicity, as it comes from His hands, and to carry it into effect for the purposes He has designed by it, without addition or alteration by ecclesiastical authority.

This ordinance, which makes holy an entire day in seven, and sets it apart for God, is of God's own appointment. He who in the beginning divided the day from the night, and set His

[1] ἀπολειπεται σαββατισμος τῳ λαῳ του Θεου.—Heb. iv. 9.

signs in the heavens to measure out the seasons of man on the earth, has also separated one day in the week from the rest, to be a sign between Him and His creatures, and to be sanctified to them as the season of worship. This separation of one portion of time from another, and this consecration of one day, returning every seven, above the rest, was the sovereign act of God, who alone has the right or the power to divide between day and day, and to stamp the character of holiness upon one more than upon another. And the question here meets us,—and it is both an important and an interesting one,—whether or not the Sabbath, thus enjoined and set apart by God for the worship of the Church, is the only season so preferred above the rest; whether or not there are other solemnities of a similar character and authority to be observed by His people; and more especially whether the Church, by its own appointment, may ordain days to be kept holy in the stated and usual order of its worship? In other words, is there any ground to allege that there are other holy days besides the weekly Sabbath of binding and permanent obligation in the Church? or is there warrant in Scripture to believe that the Church has a right to ordain days of its own authority as regular and periodical solemnities, in addition to the Sabbath, and similarly obligatory on the conscience and obedience of its members? The question of the right of the Church to appoint holidays and fast days as part and parcel of her ordinary worship, and to impose the observance of them in addition to the keeping of the Sabbath, is one of the most important in the department of the exercise of Church power in connection with the worship of God.

There can be no doubt that, whether the power belongs to the Church or not of appointing fasts and holidays, the liberty to exercise that power was very early claimed by the Christian Church; and a multitude of days, unknown to Scripture and destitute of all Scriptural authority, were, very soon after the apostolic age, observed and honoured by Christians. The introduction of anniversary days, set apart for special purposes of devotion, was one of the earliest examples of the observance or appointment of uncommanded rites and ceremonies finding its way into the Christian society. Days consecrated to the memory of particular events in the history of our Lord's life and sufferings, and death, and resurrection, were early introduced and solemnized; and next in order, and following rapidly after them, we find the

introduction of days dedicated to the remembrance of apostles, and saints, and martyrs,—a practice which, growing apace, at length filled the year with saints' days, and has crowded the calendar of the Romish Church with an untold number of fasts, and feasts, and superstitions.[1]

It is not difficult, perhaps, to trace back the origin of the superstitious reverence for days not appointed in Scripture to a practice of which we find traces even in the New Testament history. God Himself, by His express appointment, had ordained days of religious solemnities for the Jewish Church over and above the weekly Sabbath,—"days, and weeks, and years,"—the parts and elements of an outward typical and ceremonial economy. There was an interval of transition between the time when that economy was really cancelled by the resurrection of Christ and the time when it practically ceased to be regarded, during which its ceremonies, although no longer binding on the conscience, yet continued to be kept up and observed by the Jewish converts, ever prone to cling to the customs of their fathers,—a practice which was permitted by the apostles out of indulgence to their feelings and associations, although not enjoined as necessary to true Gospel obedience.

It was in accommodation to these habits and prejudices of the Jews that the practice of circumcision, for example, although legally abolished in the Christian Church, was for a time permitted to be continued as a matter of concession to their weak consciences; and that in one particular case—that, namely, of Timothy, we even find Paul actually ordering the rite to be performed, in order to avoid offence to his countrymen.[2] And it is precisely on the same footing, during the transition interval between the disuse of the Mosaic and the full establishment of the Christian economy, that we find the observance of Jewish feasts and holidays placed. The observance of these days belonged to the elements of a ceremonial law, abrogated by the death of Christ; and yet the keeping of these seasons was permitted for a short time to reign still in the Christian Church among the Jewish converts, in accommodation to their weak consciences, and

[1] [Neander, *Hist. of the Christian Church*, Torrey's Transl. Edin. 1847, vol. i. pp. 400-412. Gieseler, *Eccles. Hist.*, Davidson's Transl. Edin. 1846, vol. i. pp. 177–183.]

[2] Acts xvi. 3.

as a matter of indulgence, but not of necessity or obligation to them. In regard to the observance of such days, the conscience was free: if kept, it was a matter of gratification to the feelings and habits of those who kept them; if not kept, it was because those who did not keep them found no profit and no duty in the observance. For, in express reference to such voluntary observance or non-observance of these seasons, the Apostle Paul says: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."[1] But it can hardly be doubted that it was this permission given to individuals to keep or not to keep, as they felt it to be for their personal edification, these holidays of the Jewish Church that had been abrogated, that, through mistake and misapplication of the indulgence, was developed in after ages into the practice of the Church by its own authority enforcing the observance of fast and feast days upon all its members. Under the direction of the Apostles, and in the practice of the apostolic Church, the observance of Jewish days was a matter of permission to weak consciences, and not of command to the consciences of all,—a practice optional to individuals who felt they could use it aright, and not binding upon others. With the rapid inroad of human conceptions and superstitions into the primitive Church, the practice was converted from an individual permission to a general enactment binding upon all; and the observance of religious days, instead of being left outside of the Church as a matter of indulgence to individuals, was brought into the Church as part of its ordinary worship, and made binding on all its members indiscriminately.

It is important, then, to examine into the foundation or warrant for Church power when exercised in such a manner. We have already seen that the one distinction which separates one day in seven from others for worship is a distinction made by Divine appointment, and fitted and intended to be binding upon man universally and permanently. Is there any other distinction of days in a similar manner binding in connection with the worship by man of his Maker? In addition to the weekly Sabbath, are there any other days which the Church may by its own authority ordain as part of or necessary to the ordinary worship of God,

[1] Rom. xiv. 5, 6.

and which the members of the Church are bound to regard as similarly holy? Now, in order distinctly to apprehend and to keep in view the real point in dispute between the advocates and the opponents of ecclesiastical days, whether fast days or feast days, there are two preliminary remarks that it is important to make.

First, The question in debate between the friends and enemies of ecclesiastical holidays does not turn on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of private days set apart by individuals for their personal use and edification in the service of God, whether in the way of fasting or of thanksgiving. That such private and personal appointments may be lawful and profitable, it is neither our business nor our inclination to deny. If it be admitted that the duty of fasting, on occasions when sin committed or judgment incurred may call for humiliation and prayer of a special kind, is warranted by Scripture precept or example, then it would be difficult to deny that the individual so called upon to fast and pray may lawfully set apart a special time for the duty, whether that time be a portion or the whole of any particular day. Or, again, if it be admitted that the duty of thanksgiving for special mercies enjoyed, or special judgments averted or removed, be warranted by Scripture, it seems to be impossible not also to admit that the individual who desires so to pour out his heart to God may lawfully set apart a special time for the duty. In either case, the duty, once admitted to be binding, carries with it the warrant for setting aside from other employments or avocations a certain time for the performance of it. The rule laid down by the apostle in regard to those Jewish Christians, who desired to devote their ancient days of religious service under a former and worn-out economy to religious purposes under the Gospel economy, is plainly applicable here: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind: he that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, unto the Lord he doth not regard it." His convictions and his practice are not binding upon other men; his own conscience, when fully persuaded, is a warrant and justification in the matter to himself. It is a voluntary observance, and not obligatory upon other men in other circumstances.

Second, The controversy between the advocates and opponents of ecclesiastical holidays does not turn on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the Church, by its own authority, setting apart

occasional days of fasting or thanksgiving, as emergencies in the dealings of God with the Church may warrant or demand. There is a wide difference between what it is lawful for the Church to do on those occasions when God in His providence may be calling its members to weeping and humiliation, or summoning them to special joy and thanksgiving, and what it is lawful for the Church to do in the way of setting up a standing ordinary part of its permanent worship. In the examples given us in Scripture of such practices, and in the general principles there laid down in regard to such matters, we believe that the Church has Divine warrant for the duty both of fasting and thanksgiving, when on special occasions there may be a call to that effect in the providence of God addressed to her, and that, not less collectively than individually, it may be right and profitable, on an emergency, to join in such special observances; and if it be a duty, then the duty carries with it the warrant for the Church to order and regulate the circumstances necessary for its performance. In other words, the duty of occasional fasting laid upon the Church justifies the Church in setting apart a fixed time, whether it be a part or the whole of a day, for the duty; and the obligation of occasional thanksgiving warrants, in like manner, the appointment of a season for thanksgiving. But there is a wide difference between this and the appointment of days warranted by no such emergency, but set apart as themselves holy, and constituting a stated and permanent part of ordinary religious worship, in virtue of the authority of the Church, and binding upon all its members. The occasional, as contradistinguished from the permanent and universal use of a day for special religious services, can give no holiness to it above other days; and the extraordinary, as contradistinguished from the ordinary use of such days, can make them no constituent part of the stated worship of God. The special call which warrants the appointment of occasional days of religious service, sufficiently excludes the idea either of any holiness belonging to the day in itself, or in its appropriation, or of such extraordinary appointments forming any part of the ordinary worship of the Church, as if they were essential to it. It is not with the appointment of special days of fasting or thanksgiving that our present argument has to do.

There are two elements that enter into the notion of ecclesiastical holidays. First, they are public and general appointments,

made binding by the ordinance of the Church upon all its members, and not merely private anniversaries of a voluntary kind, which each man individually may find it to be right or profitable for himself personally to observe; and second, they are stated and permanent appointments by the Church, recurring as regularly in religious service as the weekly Sabbath, and constituting part of ordinary worship, and not merely occasional and extraordinary appointments. These two elements seem plainly to belong to the idea of ecclesiastical holidays, properly so called, and must be taken along with us in our argument. Are such holidays, then, lawful or unlawful, when appointed by ecclesiastical authority? What are the limits set to the power of the Church in this matter? If we apply to the case of ecclesiastical holidays those general principles, which more than once we have already seen so distinctly to set limits to the exercise of Church power in other matters, we shall find that such holidays have no Scriptural warrant, and that the assumption of power on the part of the Church in their appointment is unlawful. "There is no day," says the *Directory for Public Worship*, sanctioned by our Church; "there is no day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the Gospel but the Lord's Day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called *holy days*, having no warrant in the Word of God, are not to be continued. Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to separate a day or days for public fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence shall administer cause and opportunity to His people."[1]

I. Scripture, as the rule for the exercise of Church power, forbids the appointment of ecclesiastical holidays.

Under the Gospel dispensation, and within the New Testament, it cannot be pretended that there is any countenance to be found for the binding obligation of any sacred day except the weekly Sabbath. During Old Testament times, indeed, it was different; and typical days, as well as typical ordinances and typical persons, are to be found in the Jewish Church. But such days were abrogated, in so far as they had any authoritative force to command the obedience of Christians, when the ancient economy was abrogated. Nor can it be alleged that there is anything in the New Testament beyond a bare permission to the Jewish

[1] *Westminst. Direct. Append.*

converts to use such days, and that granted only in accommodation to their weak consciences, and for no more than a time. They were matters of permission, not of commandment, and in this character suited only to the transition interval between the legal abrogation of the Jewish economy and its practical disuse. But while the former use of holidays in the Old Testament Church cannot be pleaded in their favour as making them lawful or binding at the present day, there are at least three passages of Scripture that may be referred to as very emphatically discountenancing such ecclesiastical appointments.

1*st*, The very terms of the grand Sabbatical law, as announced in the fourth commandment, seem very emphatically to mark out the Sabbath itself as the only day statedly to be separated from other days for the peculiar service of God, and withdrawn, in the ordinary practice of the Church, from common and secular avocations. This is not obscurely intimated in the very language instituting the ordinance: "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The boundary line drawn around that portion of time given to man for his secular and necessary avocations is here as sharply and distinctly marked as the boundary line drawn around the portion of time appropriated to God. And it seems to be very decisively indicated, that the seventh part of the week, and neither more nor less, was to be secluded from the rest and appointed for religious worship, as the general and ordinary law for the division of man's time; and that the remainder, consisting of six-sevenths, as the customary and common rule, was to be reserved entire for the ordinary and needful work of man in this life. Ecclesiastical holidays traverse and permanently encroach upon this grand principle laid down in the fourth commandment; and they must therefore be held to be clearly discountenanced by it.[1]

2*d*, The Apostle Paul very distinctly includes holidays among the number of the things belonging to the bondage of a former dispensation, not to be considered binding upon those who had entered into the freedom of the Gospel. In his Epistle to the Galatians, much of which is directed to the object of vindicating

[1] Even in a physical and social point of view, the evil effects of the breach of this Divine law are plainly to be seen in Roman Catholic countries. The moral and spiritual consequences are still worse. The week is not spiritualized, and the Sabbath is fatally secularized by the influence of ecclesiastical holidays.

the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free through the Gospel, he rebukes the Church of Galatia for the importance they attached to the requirements of the legal dispensation, and among these to the observance of holidays. "Ye observe," says he, "days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."[1] And in the context it is not difficult to gather the twofold ground on which the apostle condemned such observances. First of all, he grounds his condemnation of ecclesiastical days on the fact that, in attaching importance to them, and regarding them as ordinary parts of the service due to God, the Galatians, like "children, were in bondage under the elements (στοιχεια) of the world;" in other words, he stigmatizes these appointments of days and seasons as rudimentary observances suited to the infancy of the Church, but only fetters to it now, when it ought to have arrived at spiritual manhood. And again, he characterizes them as "the weak and beggarly elements (or rudiments) whereunto the Galatians desired again to be in bondage."[2] They were the empty and outward appointments of a carnal and worn-out dispensation.[3]

3*d*, In the Epistle to the Colossians the same apostle comes

[1] Gal. iv. 10, 11. [Tertullian's argument against the inference from this passage, that no days should be regarded as holy under the Gospel dispensation, save those of Divine appointment, is: "The Church keeps Easter and Pentecost; therefore it cannot be wrong, and the apostle cannot mean to forbid it here"—("si omnem in totum devotionem temporum et dierum et mensium et annorum erasit apostolus, cur Pascha celebramus annuo circulo in mense primo? Cur quinquaginta exinde diebus in omne exultatione decurrimus"—De Jejun. cap. 14)—which is echoed by Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* B. v. c. lxx. 7.]

[2] Gal. iv. 3, 9.

[3] ["Hic validissimus est aries," says Calvin in his Commentary on this passage, "ad demoliendas omnes ceremoniarum pompas quibus solis Papatus splendet. . . . . Jam non loquor de vitiis majoribus magisque execrandis, quale est, quod Dei cultus esse fingunt: item, quod ad promerendam salutem imaginatur valere: item, quod majore severitate exigitur talium rugarum observatio quam totius legis Divinæ; tantum attingo eam excusationem quâ hodie novi artifices, tanquam specioso colore, tot abominationes prætexunt. Objiciant, inquam, ut volent, hodie plus multo esse ruditatis et ignorantiæ in multis quam in Israelitis olim fuerit, ideoque pluribus adminiculis indigere: nunquam enim inde efficient simili pædagogiâ esse regendos quæ valuit in populo Israelitico, semper enim ex adverso opponam Dei ordinationem aliter ferre. Si expedire dicant, negabo eos melius cernere quid expediat quam Deum Ipsum; nos potius pro certo habeamus id esse non rectissimum modo, sed etiam utilissimum quod Deus decrevit. Quare rudibus quærenda sunt adminicula, non quæ hominum libidini comminisci libuerit, sed quæ Deus Ipse destinavit, qui nihil procul dubio omisit quod Suorum infirmitati sublevandæ aptum foret."]

forth with a no less emphatic condemnation of Church holidays. Referring to the marvellous fulness of those privileges which in Christ and with Him belong to every believer, the apostle condemns the value put on the observance or non-observance of mere outward ceremonies. "Let no man judge you," says Paul, "in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."[1] And here, too, he assigns a twofold reason for the warning and admonition. Such things were but types, under a former economy, of the very blessings which Christians now enjoyed through the Gospel; and these blessings themselves being now bestowed, the mere typical representations of them were done away; "which are a shadow of things to come, but the body (or substance) is of Christ." And still further, such ordinances, whatever authority they once had, were now but human appointments, from which it was the very object of the Gospel to emancipate them. "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,[2] why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not, taste not, etc.), after the commandments and doctrines of men?"[3] Judging by such statements as these, we seem to be inevitably shut up to the inference, that Scripture, as the rule for the use and limitation of Church power, forbids its exercise in the way of appointing ecclesiastical holidays.

II. The authority of Christ, as the source of Church power, limits it so as to exclude the right of appointing ecclesiastical holidays.

It is never to be forgotten, that all worship on the part of man addressed to God is an act done unto God. It is an acknowledgment of His authority as having opened up the way and appointed the manner for sinners to approach Him, and a religious expression of their homage to that authority. This is more especially apparent in regard to the positive institutions or parts of worship. Such institutions are used by us in worship, simply because God has appointed them; and in the use of these, and not of others, we do homage to God, as having the authority both to require the worship at our hands, and to regulate the forms

[1] Col. ii. 16.

[2] ["From ritualistic observances and all non-Christian rudiments which in any way resembled them."—Ellicott *in loc.*]

[3] Col. ii. 17, 20–22.

and institutions of it. All this is abundantly obvious in the case of the Sabbath itself. In keeping the last day of the week as a day of religious observance, the Jews, by the very act, expressed their religious acknowledgment of God, who had appointed it, and did an act of worship to Him as its author, in the character of the one Creator who made the heavens and the earth. In keeping the first day of the week now, Christians, by the very act, recognise Christ as the author of it, and do an act of religious homage to Him as the one Redeemer, who on that day rose from the dead, and secured the salvation of His people. By keeping the last day of the week holy, the Jews, by the very act, adored one God, the Creator of all. In keeping the first day of the week holy, Christians, by the very act, adore one Saviour, the Redeemer of all. Though there were no other service rendered on the Sabbath, and though our lips were silent and our tongues expressed no articulate praise, the single act of keeping the first day of the week holy would be an act of religious homage to the authority, and of solemn adoration to the person, of Christ. The observance of that day above the rest, as part of the ordinary worship of the Church, is an act of adoration to Christ, as much as a hymn in His praise would be an expression of adoration to Christ. And who does not see, that upon the very same principle the observance of holidays appointed by the Church, as ordinary and stated parts of Divine worship, is an expression of religious homage to man, who is the author of the appointment,—an unlawful acknowledgment of human or ecclesiastical authority in an act of worship. In keeping, after a religious sort, a day that has no authority but man's, we are paying a religious homage to that authority; we are bowing down, in the very act of our observance of the day as part of worship, not to Christ, who has not appointed it, but to the Church, which has. We are keeping the season holy, not to God, but to man.

Such uncommanded seasons, observed in religious worship as a part of it, cannot but be an unlawful encroachment upon the authority of Christ. They are instituted, not in His name, but in man's. They are kept, not in His name, but in the Church's name. They are holy, and honoured as holy, not because of His authority, but because of ecclesiastical authority. They are an expression of religious homage addressed, not to the Divine Master, but to His human servant. If they are acts of worship

at all, they are the worship, not of Christ the Saviour, but of the Church's ordinance and authority. In this point of view, the observance, after a religious manner, of human or ecclesiastical days is a daring interference with the sole authority of Him who is the Divine Head of the Church, to be adored in it, and the Divine Head of ordinances, to be adored through them. The authority of Christ as the Divine source of Church power, forbids the exercise of it in such a manner as to dishonour Himself; it forbids the appointment by it of holidays in worship, other than He has appointed.[1]

III. The liberty and edification of Christ's people, the grand aim and end of Church power, are inconsistent with that exercise of it which ordains ecclesiastical holidays.

In drawing near to God in holy things, as emphatically as in other matters, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It is of the very essence of acceptable worship, that men "be fully persuaded in their own minds," and that the conscience, out of a sense of duty, lend its free and willing consent to the acts of worship, as authorized and required by that God who has a right to bind the conscience, and to lay upon it the sense of obligation. The appointment of ecclesiastical holidays, as parts of worship addressed to God, is inconsistent with the right exercise of conscience in the matter; and that whether the conscience is offended and grieved by the introduction of human and uncommanded ordinances in Divine service, or whether the conscience, deluded and ignorant as to the sin, has no sense of the injury and wrong done to it. In the one case,—if the conscience is hurt and aggrieved by the imposition, in a matter so nearly concerning it as God's worship, of unwarranted and uncommanded rites, and is forced, although wounded and offended, to submit against its felt conviction, it is plain that here there can be no liberty left to it at all, but that its Christian rights and freedom in the very matter of approaching to God are trampled under foot. The oppression upon the conscience in such a case is both great and painfully felt. But even in the other case,—when the conscience is not forced to stifle its own convictions, because no convictions of the wrong done to it are felt,—when, knowing them to be no more than human or ecclesiastical ordinances, they are

[1] [Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part. iii. chap. i. 6–14. Calderwood, *Altare Damascenum*, cap. 10.]

yet made use of in God's worship at the bidding of the Church, without any feeling of being offended by the unlawful imposition, still Christian liberty is taken away not the less, and the conscience is enthralled as much, or rather all the more, because it is unconscious of the thraldom. That the conscience should be taught and trained, in a matter of conscience, to yield a passive and unconscious submission,—that in the very worship of God the conscience should be instructed to own the obligation, not of God's authority, but of man's,—that the act of religious service should be a homage done, not to Christ, but to the Church,—this is to destroy true and intelligent liberty of conscience; and the deed is all the worse, and not the better, because the conscience is made to feel no wrong, but rather to love the yoke that binds it. It matters not whether, in the appointment and observance of human and uncommanded days, as part of God's worship, by ecclesiastical authority, the conscience of those on whom they are enforced feels the chain or not. In either case, the imposition is inconsistent with the true liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free.[1]

IV. The true nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, excludes the imposition of holidays as stated and ordinary parts of worship.

The controversy with the friends of uncommanded ordinances, such as ecclesiastical holidays, in Divine worship, is very much the controversy which the Apostle Paul so strenuously maintained with the Judaizers of his day, who sought to bring into the spirituality and simplicity of the Gospel Church the carnal observances of a carnal economy that had been abrogated. For the Church to appoint and enforce such days, is a departure from the spirituality of that dispensation which is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit; and a step, and no small one, backward in the direction of that fleshly system that had been done away with. There were under that former economy holy places, more sacred to God and more acceptable in His sight than others. There were holy seasons, in which more than in others the presence of God was enjoyed, and the prayers of His worshippers were effectual. There was a formal consecration of places and times, by which the Jews were taught and warranted to connect the presence of God more particularly with one spot of earth and with certain seasons than with others. The Israelites

[1] [Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part i. chaps. vii.–ix.]

had Jerusalem and the temple there, with its solemn feasts and sacred seasons; and these more especially and peculiarly were "holiness to the Lord." Such outward and ceremonial holiness of places and times has been done away, and is unknown under the Gospel. "Neither at Jerusalem, nor in the Temple, do men now worship the Father." There is no sacred spot on earth now, where we must take our shoes from off our feet, because it is, above all others, the dwelling-place of God. There is no temple on earth or in heaven consecrated to Jehovah and made holy by His presence, save the temple of Christ's glorified body, and the temple of each believer's soul. "The true worshippers now worship the Father in spirit as well as in truth." It is a spiritual service, linked to no altar, and chained to no place of prayer. And if there be yet one day in seven holier than others,—if the Sabbath, and that alone, is a time sacred to God, that ordinance of holiness had neither its birth nor its kindred with the ceremonial holy days of an outward economy. It had a higher origin and a loftier character; it was the resting time of God, when He finished His mighty work of creation, long before the Jewish dispensation was appointed; and, holier still, it was the resting time of Christ when He rose from His work of toil and blood, and entered into His rest when that dispensation was abrogated.

There is something mysteriously sublime in that peculiar holiness which distinguishes the Sabbath as the only holy day known under the Gospel dispensation, marked out as it is from all time, since time itself began to be numbered; and connecting, as it seems intended to do, the narrow section of time which belongs to the history of this world with that eternity into which it is about to be merged. For the ordinance of the Lord's Day shall bear witness to His resurrection, as the ordinance of the Lord's Table speaks of His death, "till He come again." It was the Sabbath of God the Father at the creation,—a day of His eternal subsistence let down from heaven, and inserted among the days that then began to be counted on the unfallen earth. It was the Sabbath of God the Son at the redemption,—another day of heavenly rest let down from on high, and inserted amid the days of evil and sorrow which this fallen world had so long numbered,—a day on which the Redeemer rested and was refreshed, when His work was done. And now the Sabbath day both of creation and redemption awaits the development of

the Divine dispensations, and points forward to a higher, so surely coming, when the earthly day shall be taken up into the heavenly, and become the Sabbath of God the Holy Ghost,—when He too shall rest from His special work, as the Father and the Son rested before, and shall repose and be refreshed in the contemplation and enjoyment, throughout eternity, of His finished work of grace and spiritual renovation.[1]

[1] Calderwood, *Re-examination of the Five Articles of Perth*, 1636, pp. 139-209. [Voetius, *De Sabbatho et Festis, Polit. Eccles.* tom. ii. lib. iv. Tract iv. cap. i.; *Causa Episcopatûs Hierarchici Lucifuga*, Edin. 1706, pp. 268–272. Rule, *The Good Old Way Defended*, Edin. 1697, pp. 203-245.]

SUBDIVISION III.

THE INSTRUMENTALITY FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP, OR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE MINISTRY A DIVINE AND STANDING ORDINANCE IN THE CHURCH—THE MINISTERIAL AND PASTORAL TITLE.

HAVING dealt with and dismissed the subject of the time of Church worship, the order of discussion brings us next to the consideration of the power of the Church in reference to the ministry or instrumentality for public worship; or the consideration of the right and duty of the Church to set apart a particular order of men by ordination for discharging the duties included in the conducting of Divine service. There are certain duties that belong to Church worship which cannot be discharged by the members of the congregation indiscriminately. In the duty of joint prayer in public worship, there is needed some one who may act as the organ of the rest to express their united requests in language, and present them to God in their name as well as his own. In reading or preaching the Word, which is another important part of ordinary worship, there is needed one gifted and qualified for the task of doing so in presence of the congregation, and in such a manner as may be for their edification and instruction. In the dispensation of ordinances and Sacraments, also belonging to public worship as an ordinary part of it, it is impossible that the members of the Church can act collectively or indiscriminately; and it is necessary that some one be appointed suitably to discharge such duties on behalf of the rest. If public worship be an ordinance of God to be statedly celebrated

in His Church on one day every seven, and if such duties as those of joint prayer and praise, of the reading and preaching of the Word in public, of the dispensation of Sacraments, be duties to be permanently performed in the Christian society, then it inevitably follows, even upon the principles of natural reason, that some special parties must be vested with the office and power necessary for such services, and be commissioned to discharge them on behalf of the rest. The stated administration of such services in the Church necessarily carries with it the warrant and authority to set apart certain office-bearers distinct from the rest to perform the duty. Were the Church of Christ no more than a voluntary society, and the worship of the Church on Sabbath no more than a human solemnity, experience would soon dictate the necessity for this. What might be the character or powers proper to such office-bearers, would be a question to be determined by the nature of the service to be rendered by them. But in every organized society, whether of Divine appointment or human arrangement, having numerous and important duties to discharge, there is a necessity for organs and office-bearers of some kind or other to act on behalf of the society, and to do its peculiar work; and the necessity would seem to be not diminished, but increased, if the society itself be a Divine appointment, such as is the Christian Church, and if the work to be performed be the celebration of Divine worship and administration of Divine ordinances on behalf of the Church's members.

We may safely assert, then, that there is a necessity laid upon the Christian Church, in common with every other society, to have officers of some kind, or a ministry, for the purpose of acting on behalf of the society and managing its affairs, more especially for conducting the stated and ordinary worship of the Church. Those who hold the ecclesiastical system of the Quakers are the only religious body who are prepared to negative this general proposition; all other denominations, however much they may differ as to the nature of the ministerial office or the power implied in it, agree in maintaining the general principle, that a ministry of some kind or other is necessary to the right performance of the Church's duties. An order of men specially set apart for the work of the ministry in the Christian Church is, however, an institution the lawfulness of which is denied by those who hold the Quaker theory, on the same ground on which they deny the Divine

authority or obligation of all the positive institutions of Christianity. The inward light given to every Christian, and the extraordinary influences of the Spirit vouchsafed, are, according to their system, sufficient to supersede the use of positive institutions of any kind; and the office of the ministry especially, as an office for teaching and dispensation of Word and Sacrament, is accounted inconsistent with the office of the Spirit, and hence unlawful.[1] Beyond the circle of religious denominations, the denial of the office of a Christian ministry as a standing institution in the Church is shared in by those who account the Church to be no more than a human and voluntary society, and whose views regarding the Church itself lead them to look upon the ministry as a mere optional and economical arrangement, adopted by the Christian society at its own hand, and having no other authority. The Quakers hold that the ordinance of the ministry is unlawful, as an unwarranted encroachment on the office of the Spirit of God. Those who regard the Church as a mere human society, hold that the ordinance of the ministry is not unlawful so much as unauthoritative, and destitute of all warrant beyond human and voluntary arrangement. With both parties, the office of a peculiar set of men, set apart to conduct the worship and perform the work of the Church of Christ, is an office without authority from Him, and destitute of all real claims to be regarded as a Divine and permanent appointment in the Church.

In entering, then, on the consideration of the power of the Church in connection with the ministry for worship, the first question that meets us is as to the right of the Church to set apart some of her members to such an office. Is the office itself of human or Divine origin? Is it a mere matter of arrangement and convenience in the Christian society, to ordain certain men to the work of the ministry, as any other human and voluntary society might set apart office-bearers to act on its behalf and to do its work; and have these men no more than human authority for the position they hold? Or, on the contrary, has the Church a right from Christ to ordain men in His name to be stewards of His Word and mysteries; and is the office to which they are thus set apart one of Divine appointment and permanent standing in the Christian Church? To this question, at the outset of the argument, we must turn our attention.

[1] [Barclay, *Apology*, 10th ed. Lond. 1841, pp. 264–268, 282–310, 328–386.]

I. The office of pastors and teachers is a standing ordinance of Christ in His Church. The ministry is of Divine appointment, and it is a permanent office in the Christian Church.

The evidence at hand to substantiate this general proposition is derived from various and abundant sources.

1*st*, The ordinance of worship, as an ordinary and standing appointment in the Christian Church, requires the office of the ministry for its administration. In the very fact that Christ has appointed institutions of worship and a public service of the sanctuary, and destined these to be perpetual in the Christian society, we have a strong evidence for the Divine appointment and permanent nature of the ministerial office also. That public worship, with all its positive ordinances, was of Divine origin in the Church, and designed to be a standing appointment for Christians in all ages, we have had occasion already to prove; and it is not necessary now to go back upon the evidence. But the general proof then adduced goes much further than to demonstrate that the ordinances of worship are Divine, and permanently binding on the Church. Inasmuch as these ordinances cannot administer themselves, the proof in favour of them also carries with it an evidence in favour of a standing order of men set apart, and necessary for their administration. If Church worship is itself a Divine and permanent ordinance, it inevitably implies worshippers on the one hand, and the administration of worship on the other,—the office of those who are ministered unto in religious service, and the office of those who minister.

2*d*, The appointment of the Apostles by our Lord, with the commission given to them to "go and make disciples of all nations," is itself an evidence of His intention to employ, in the conversion of the world, not merely the mission of the Holy Spirit, but the mission of men holding an office and employing it for that use. It was not simply to the Apostles personally that Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The promise which He joined to the command, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (ἑως της συντελειας του αἰωνος),[1] sufficiently intimates that the office of teaching and administering Sacraments was to be perpetual and permanent in the Church. In the commission

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15, 16.

thus given to the first teachers of the Word, linked as it is to the promise of His spiritual presence with them through all ages, we have in fact the *twofold* agency to be employed by Christ for the conversion of men, and evidence that both forms of that agency were equally and alike to be permanent on the earth. *First*, there is the agency of a human ministry for preaching the Word and dispensing the Sacraments; and *second*, there is the agency of the Spirit to be present with them and make them effectual. Both of these are made mention of in the commission and promise given to the Apostles as representing the Church; and both were to be standing and permanent instruments for the conversion of men, "even unto the end of the world."

3d, We find that provision was made by the Apostles for a sufficient staff of pastors and teachers to succeed them after their own removal, and to supply their absence in the Churches from which they were separated. In the New Testament history we find the inspired men, who are commissioned to be the founders of the Christian society, taking care to provide with teachers and ministers the Churches that they founded. To Timothy the Apostle Paul gave the injunction: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." [1] To Titus he says: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee,"—men who would "hold fast the faithful Word as they had been taught, that they be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince gainsayers." [2] In every place, the first object of the Apostles was to provide for the continuance of the ministry.

4th, We have manifold passages of Scripture in which both the qualifications and duties of pastors and teachers are described and enjoined, — a decisive evidence that they were not merely appointed for a time, and to cease with the apostolic age, but were designed to be a permanent ordinance in the Christian Church. No small portion of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus—commonly known as the Pastoral Epistles—are occupied with directions from the apostle as to the exercise of the ministerial office, as to the qualifications demanded in those who filled it, and as to the duties expected at their hands. In the first

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 2. [2] Titus i. 5, 9.

Epistle to the Corinthians we find the same apostle laying down at length those principles that were to guard against abuses and disorders in the exercise of ministerial gifts, and endeavouring anxiously not to do away with the office as only temporary, but rather to apply a perpetual and permanent remedy to its misapplications; and, scattered up and down through the New Testament writings, we find numerous passages prescribing the duties of the ministry, in a way that clearly implies that it was designed to be a standing and ordinary office in the Christian Church.

5th, As a counterpart to the duties enjoined on pastors and teachers in the New Testament, we have the duties enjoined on the flock towards their ministers,—another evidence, if such were needed, of the permanent nature of the office. "Let the elders," says Paul, "that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine;" "Let him that is taught communicate to him that teacheth in all good things;" "Take heed how ye hear," etc.[1] Such passages as these plainly take it for granted that the duty of members of the Church towards their pastors and teachers was an ordinary and permanent duty; and they warrant us in saying that the office itself was not a temporary one, but, on the contrary, destined to occupy a perpetual place of authority and edification in the Christian Church.

6th, The very names and titles given to pastors and teachers in Scripture proclaim them to hold a standing and ordinary office in the Christian Church. They are called "ministers of Christ;" they are represented as "stewards of the mysteries of God;" they are spoken of as "ambassadors for Christ;" they are described as "labourers thrust forth unto the harvest by the Lord of the harvest."[2] All these titles or designations seem, more or less, to forbid the idea that their office was only temporary, and about to be abolished. They amount, on the contrary, to pretty decisive evidence, that it was of permanent use and standing authority in the Christian Church.

Such, then, is the clear and abundant evidence that we have for the perpetuity of the office of the ministry in the Christian Church. It is no mere human device or optional arrangement, had recourse to for the convenience of the Christian society, and

[1] 1 Tim. v. 17; Gal. vi. 6; Luke viii. 18.

[2] 1 Cor. iii. 5, iv. 1; 2 Cor. xi. 23; Titus i. 7; 2 Cor. v. 20; Matt. ix. 38; Luke x. 2.

edification of its members. The convenience and edification that are linked so closely and manifestly to the office are the least of its claims to be perpetuated and reverenced in the Church of Christ. It forms one of those positive institutions of Christ by which He has made provision through every age for the advancement and perfecting of His own work on earth; and, armed with His authority, and appealing to Him for their warrant, the ministers of the Church are entitled to claim that they be regarded, in a high and peculiar sense, His representatives and servants in all the work of their ministry, and as His living and standing ordinance for the dispensation of Word and Sacrament in the Church. That a certain order of men should be set apart and ordained to the office of conducting the worship and ordering the affairs of the Christian society, is no assumption of power or authority by them alien to the character and hostile to the interests of the Church. The seclusion from the rest, and the ordination to peculiar duties, of a few of the members of the Church, for the benefit of the whole, is no human device or arrangement, savouring of a love of power or an assumption of mysterious and super-eminent right by an exclusive caste. Whatever may be the power or rights that belong to them, it cannot be denied, that an office of the ministry and an order of ministers have been instituted by Christ in His Church. The office of pastors and teachers is of Divine appointment and of permanent authority in the Church of Christ.[1]

But after establishing this general proposition, there is another question of a very important kind that meets us, and demands consideration and reply. From what quarter is a right and title to the office of the ministry derived; and who are the parties who have received commission and authority to exercise the office? There seems to be clear and satisfactory evidence to prove that such an office has been appointed by Christ in His Church, and designed to be permanent and perpetual there. Who, then, have a title to enter upon the authority and the duties implied in the office; and what is the warrant which the individual who lawfully fills the office can exhibit for his assumption of it? From what party or parties is the ministerial title derived?

[1] *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici.* By the Provincial Assembly of London. Lond. 1654. Part i. chaps. i.-iii. Gillespie, *Miscell. Quest.* chap. i. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. iii. 1–3. Turrettin, *Opera*, tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. xxii.]

II. The title to the possession of the ministerial office is conferred by the call of Christ.

The office is Christ's, and the title to enter upon the office is from Christ also. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." It is the "Lord of the harvest" that "sendeth forth labourers into His harvest." "It is God that maketh able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit."[1] The right to the ministerial office is a right bestowed on individuals by the Divine Head of the Church, and any appointment to the office without such a commission from Him is null and void. This unavoidably follows, from the very fact that Christ has reserved all rule and authority in His Church unto Himself, that He still wields it according to His own pleasure, and that, as the ever-living and ever-present Head of ordinances, He not only instituted them at the first, but continues to administer them in the Christian society ever after. There can be no authority exercised in His Church which is not conferred immediately by Him, and no power administered except what He gives. Christ has not vested in the Church a deposit of power and authority communicable by it to its office-bearers or servants, and received and administered by them as from the Church itself. On the contrary, Christ has retained all such power and authority in His own hand, and gives it directly and immediately from Himself to those whom He appoints to office or rule in the Church. Its office-bearers receive their office, not from the Church, but from Christ Himself; they hold their office, not from the Church, but from its Head; they administer their office, not in virtue of power or authority conferred by the Church, but in virtue of the warrant and the power given by its Divine Lord. The Church does not come between its Head and its own office-bearers, as vesting them with office, or bestowing the commission and the gifts necessary to its discharge. The office is from Christ, the authority for administering its functions is from Christ, the gifts and graces and ability which men need in order to exercise it rightly are from Christ. They would not be "the ministers of Christ" were it otherwise; they would be only the nominees of the Church. If a minister is a minister of the Saviour, he must hold his commission, not from man, but from the Lord. If he be "an ambassador for

[1] Heb. v. 4; Matt. ix. 38; 2 Cor. iii. 6.

Christ," he must have his credentials written by Christ Himself. If he is "called of God, as was Aaron," he must have his call directly from God, without the intervention of a third party. It was the immediate call and word of God addressed to Him that commissioned even Christ Himself to His office; "for He glorified not Himself to be made an high priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee." [1] And what was necessary to give validity to the office of Christ, is no less necessary to give validity to the office of any pastor or teacher in Christ's Church on earth. It is the immediate call and warrant of God addressed to a minister that give him his title to the ministerial office.

Is it asked, In what manner is the call or commission or warrant, which every real minister receives from Christ to the ministerial office, obtained; or in what way may the individual himself come to know that he has received it? The answer to the question it is not difficult to find. The Scriptures themselves have given us a clear and authoritative rule whereby to ascertain who are and who are not called and commissioned by Christ to be His servants for the work of the ministry. They have described the gifts and qualifications which Christ gives to all to whom His call and commission are addressed. There are "gifts differing according to the grace that is given;" gifts, according to the statement of the apostle, for the various offices of the Church; gifts for "prophecy," for "the ministry," for "teaching," for "exhortation," for "ruling." [2] And these special and peculiar gifts for office, thus bestowed by Christ and enjoyed by individuals, are the token and the evidence to such individuals that they have Christ's warrant and call to the office. There is needed no supernatural call personally addressed to a man to assure him of his warrant to serve the Church of Christ in its ministry. There is no miraculous light thrown across the path, no voice from on high, like that which met Paul on the road to Damascus, sent to meet a man now, and summon him to the public service of Christ. But the gifts and graces for the office, when conferred, are God's commission and call to the office. In the special endowments qualifying for the work bestowed by Christ, there are Christ's warrant and title giving a right to conclude that a man has been chosen for the work. When a man feels that his are the

[1] Heb. v. 5–10. [2] Rom. xii. 6–8.

spiritual qualifications as well as the spiritual longing to serve the Church in the ministry of Christ, when "zeal for the honour of God and love for the souls of men" are added—as indeed "great motives and chief inducements"[1]—to the special gifts and graces that fit for office, he has reason to judge that these are the call of Christ, and that unless he has misread and misinterpreted the commission, he has received from Him, who alone can bestow it, a title to the ministerial office in the Church.

III. The title to the *exercise* of the ministerial office is, in ordinary circumstances, conferred by Christ through the call of the Church.

There is a distinction, and a most important one in the argument, to be drawn between the title to the *possession* of the ministerial office, and the title to the *exercise* of the ministerial office. The former, or the right to the office, is the gift immediately of Christ; His call, directly addressed to the individual, gives him this first right. The latter, or the right to the exercise of the office, is also the gift of Christ; not, however, immediately or directly bestowed, but conferred through the regular and outward appointment of the Church.

The first, or a right to the ministerial office, is one involved in the call of the Saviour Himself, addressed and announced to the individual by the bestowment upon him of those special gifts and graces of a spiritual kind which alone can qualify him for the office. The second, or a right to the exercise of the office, is involved in the call of the Church, when, by ordination and regular investiture, he is outwardly set apart to the discharge of the duties connected with the office. The warrant both to possess and exercise the office is complete only then when he has received both the direct call of Christ and the outward call of the Church. The one of these, or the inward call addressed to him from His Lord in heaven, gives a warrant and title to the possession of the ministerial office; and that title is made good to the effect of conferring the right—not to the possession, but over and above that—to the exercise of the ministerial office, when it is recognised by the Church as coming from its Divine Head, and when the Church, in deference to His choice thus intimated, proceeds to give the outward call, and by ordination solemnly to set apart the

[1] Questions before Ordination or Induction, 7. Auth. Documents of the Free Church, p. 39, at end of Subordinate Standards, Lond. 1860.

individual so chosen to the office of the ministry. The distinction of the old divines, formerly adopted in regard to the residence of Church power, is the very distinction to be adopted in the case before us of a right to the ministerial office. That right may be regarded as existing "*in esse*," and it may be regarded as existing "*in operari*;" and in all ordinary cases the one of these must supplement the other before a man is entitled to assume the power of discharging the duties of the ministry. The right "*in esse*" is conferred immediately by the call of Christ, expressed to the individual through the bestowment on him of the special gifts and graces suitable for office. The right "*in operari*" is conferred by Christ too, but in ordinary circumstances only through the call of the Church to the same individual, recognising in him the choice of Christ, and proceeding, by the solemn act of ordination, to set him apart to the office of the ministry. Until this formal and outward call of the Church is superadded to the inward call of Christ, the individual's title to the ministerial office, both for the possession and for the exercise of it, is not, in ordinary circumstances, complete.

I do not stop at present, because I shall refer to it afterwards, to inquire what *extraordinary* circumstances may justify or demand. But on all ordinary occasions, the right to the ministerial office "*in esse*" and the right to it "*in operari*" must be conjoined; and the call of Christ and the call of the Church must unite before a man is justified in entering upon the work of the ministry. The outward investiture by ecclesiastical ordination is needful for the work of the ministry besides the call, inward and sovereign, of Christ to the office of the ministry. The one ought to be added to the other before a man may regularly enter upon ecclesiastical duties in the Church.

That in ordinary circumstances a minister ought to be ordained to his office by those who have been in office before, is an assertion which is justified both by Scripture injunction and Scripture example. The practice of ordination, through which an individual is admitted to the exercise of the ministry, is one very distinctly sanctioned and required by apostolic authority. The imposition of hands by the office-bearers of the Church was not a mere empty and unmeaning ceremony, but the last and crowning act by which the previous call of Christ to the individual was recognised and given practical effect to, and he was set apart to

the work of the ministry. When the extraordinary call addressed to Paul and Barnabas by God to enter upon their ministry to the Gentiles was intimated to the Church,—when the office-bearers at Antioch were told, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,"—the Church proceeded to implement and carry out the call from heaven by human ordination to the work. "When they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."[1] When Timothy was set apart to the work of an evangelist, we have again the twofold call from God in the first instance, and from the Church afterwards. The "gift," we are told, "was given him by prophecy," implying a Divine call; and, conjointly with this, "it was given him by laying on of the hands of the presbytery," implying an ecclesiastical call.[2] When Timothy is to be instructed by Paul how to set in order the things in the Church, he is strictly charged to "lay hands suddenly on no man,"—an injunction which plainly implies that Timothy ought to be careful to see that those who were ordained to office by the Church had the previous and necessary call from the Divine Head.[3] In short, ordination by the Church was the ordinary and authorized method in the apostolic practice for the investiture with office of those found qualified by the previous call and special gifts conferred by Christ. Not that the ordination by the Church conferred a right to the office of the ministry. That right was previously conferred by Christ; and ordination, in itself, was no more than the Church's recognition of the right so conferred, and the Church's admission of the individual to the discharge of the office to which he was thus called. The solemn act of ordination, by which they were formally admitted to the office, or invested with the right to discharge its functions, is not to be confounded with the previous right to the office itself, derived from a higher

[1] Acts xiii. 1–3. ["Quorsum isthæc segregatio et manuum impositio, postquam suam electionem testatus est Spiritus Sanctus, nisi ut ecclesiastica disciplina in designandis per homines ministris conservaretur? Nullo igitur illustriore documento ejusmodi ordinem approbare Deus potuit quam dum Paulum gentibus apostolum se destinasse præfatus, eum tamen ab Ecclesia vult designari."—Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. iii. 14.]

[2] 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6. [*Cf.* Calvin in loc. and vol. ii. of this work, Part iv. chap. iv.]

[3] 1 Tim. v. 22: Χειρας ταχεως μηδενι ἐπιτιθει. Χειρας or τας χειρας ἐπιτιθεναι is the invariable phrase for the ceremony of ordination in the New Testament. *Cf.* Acts vi. 6, xiii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14.

source; far less is it to be regarded as itself conferring that right. It is not the title to the office, but the title to the exercise of the office—not the office "*in esse*," but the office "*in operari*"—that is bestowed by Christ through the outward call and ordination by the Church.[1]

IV. The title to the *pastoral* office in addition to the *ministerial* office requires to be confirmed by the consent or election of the members of the congregation over whom the minister is appointed.

There is an obvious distinction—although not seldom overlooked—between the ministerial office and the pastoral office. The title to the ministerial office, and to the ordinary exercise of all its powers and discharge of all its duties, is completed by the joint call of Christ inwardly and of the Church outwardly. Ordination by the office-bearers of the Church completes the title, and constitutes the individual ordained a minister of the Church universal, free to exercise the office wherever Providence may open the way to him. The existence of the ministerial office is noways dependent on the members of the Church, nor is the consent or election by the people necessary to the validity of ordination. It is different with the pastoral office, by ordination to which a man is constituted not so much a minister of the Church universal, as a minister of a particular congregation; and the pastoral relation is formed between him and a particular flock. That pastoral relation necessarily implies the election, or at least the consent, of the people, in order to make the formation of the tie lawful; and this element therefore enters as an essential one into the title to the pastoral office. In addition to the joint call by Christ and the Church, which is necessary to give a right to the exercise of the ministerial office, there is also the consent or election by the people, which is necessary to constitute, over and above the ministerial, the pastoral character. The pastor cannot properly discharge the duties of the pastoral office without the consent of the people over whom he is appointed. The minister, standing in no such pastoral relationship to any particular congregation, does not need the election or consent of the people to give him a valid right to the office which he holds.[2]

[1] *Jus Div. Minist. Evang.* Part i. chap. iv. 5–7. Poole, *Quo Warranto*, Lond. 1658, chaps. vii.–x. [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. iii. 11–13. Owen, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. ix. pp. 431–462; vol. xiii. pp. 31–49.]

[2] ["Est impia Ecclesiæ spoliatio," are Calvin's emphatic words: "quoties

It is true that the ministerial office is necessary to the full discharge of the duties implied in the pastoral office; and the latter is never conferred without the former, although the former may be conferred without the latter. The pastor must always be a minister, although it is not necessary that the minister should always be a pastor. The separation between the ministerial office and the pastoral must, in order to a right understanding of the subject, be kept distinctly in view, although such a separation in practice is not, in ordinary circumstances, a thing desirable. "It is agreeable to the Word of God," say the Westminster Divines in treating of the Ordination of Ministers; "it is agreeable to the Word of God, and *very expedient*, that such as are to be ordained ministers be designed to some particular Church or other ministerial charge."[1] But whatever in practice may be expedient, it cannot be doubted that there is a broad and important difference in the nature of the things between the ministerial and the pastoral office. Ordination to the ministry needs, in order to secure its validity, nothing but the call of Christ on the one hand, and the call of the Church through its office-bearers on the other. The right to the ministry—the right to go forth and preach the Gospel of Christ, wherever Christ may give opportunity—does not wait on the consent of the people, and is not suspended on the choice or invitations of men. Ordination to the pastorate, on the other hand, in order to be lawful and right, must, in addition to the call of Christ, and the ordination by the office-bearers of the Church, have also the consent and election of the people. It is the ministerial office tied down to a particular congregation, and not discharging its functions at large; and Scripture and reason both abundantly testify, that for this office the consent of the congregation is required.[2] The title to the pastoral office in

alicui populo ingeritur episcopus, quem non petierit, vel saltem liberâ voce approbârit." And again, in speaking of the Roman Catholic method of ordination: "Ceremonias adhibent vel ex Judaismo arcessitas, vel ex se ipsis confictas; quibus abstinere satius foret. De vero autem examine (umbram enim illam quam retinent nihil moror), de populi consensu, de aliis rebus *necessariis*, nulla mentio."—*Inst.* lib. iv. cap. v. 3, 5. Compare also cap. iii. 15, iv. 10–14, v. 2–5; *Necessity of Reforming the Church;* Vol. i. of Tracts relating to the Ref., Calvin Transl. Soc. Edin. 1844, p. 171.]

[1] Form of Church Government. Concerning the Doctrinal Part of Ordination of Ministers, 6.

[2] ["Why," asks Milton, "should not the piety and conscience of Englishmen, as members of the Church, be trusted in the election of pastors to

addition to the ministerial requires to be strengthened and confirmed by the call of the people.[1]

functions that nothing concern a monarch, as well as their worldly wisdoms are privileged, as members of the state, in suffraging their knights and burgesses to matters that concern him nearly? . . . We therefore having already a kind of apostolical and ancient Church-election in our State, what a perverseness would it be in us of all others to retain forcibly a kind of imperious and stately election in our Church! And what a blindness to think that what is already evangelical, as it were, by a happy chance, in our polity, should be repugnant to that which is the same by Divine command in the ministry!" —*Prose Works*, Lond. 1753, vol. i. p. 25. *Cf.* Gillespie, *Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland*, Edin. 1641, Part ii. chap. v. pp. 154–157. "It can be no exaggeration to say," observes one who will not be suspected of partiality for the views and customs of the historic Church of Scotland, "that if the practice of electing bishops by universal suffrage (among the Church members) had continued, the habits of freedom would have been so diffused among the people, that the changes our own age has witnessed might have been anticipated by many centuries, and might have been effected under the direct patronage of Catholicism."—Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, vol. ii. p. 153. Compare also Schenkel's remarks on the consequences of the failure in developing the popular congregational element in the Lutheran Church, Art. Kirche in Herzog's *Real Encyclopädie*.]

[1] "Lors qu'on examine bien ce que c'est que la vocation pour s'en former une juste idée, on trouve que c'est proprement une relation qui resulte de *l'accord de trois volontez*, savoir de celle de Dieu, de celle de l'Eglise, et de celle de la personne appellée: car ces trois consentemens font toute l'essence de la vocation, et les autres choses qu'on y peut ajoûter, comme l'examen, l'élection, l'ordination, sont ou des conditions préalables, ou des signes et des ceremonies exterieures, qui regardent plus la maniere de la vocation que la vocation mesme. En effet, on ne peut remarquer dans une vocation que trois interêts qui y puissent estre engagez, celuy de Dieu, puis que l'appellé doit parler et agir en son nom: celuy de l'Eglise, qui doit estre instruite, servie, et gouvernée; et celuy de l'appellé, qui doit remplir les fonctions de sa charge, et luy consacrer ses veilles, ses soins, et ses travaux; d'où il s'ensuit que la vocation est suffisamment formée lorsque Dieu, l'Eglise, et la personne appellée en demeurent d'accord, et que l'on ne peut raisonnablement y concevoir autre chose. . . . Pour la volonté de l'Eglise, on ne peut pas, ce me semble, desavouer que naturellement ce ne soit celle de tout le corps, et non simplement celle des pasteurs, qui y doit intervenir. Car ce ne sont pas les seuls pasteurs qui ont interest dans la vocation d'un homme, c'est generalement tout le corps de l'Eglise, c'est celle qui en doit estre, comme j'ay dit, instruite, servie, et gouvernée, c'est celle qui doit recevoir les Sacremens des mains de l'appellé, et qui doit estre consolée, edifiée par sa parole. *Son consentement y est donc necessaire, et il est de l'essence de la vocation qu'il y intervienne.*"—Claude, *Défense de la Reform.* 4me Partie, chap. iii. 8, English Transl. 1683, pp. 59–76. Turrettin, *Opera*, tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. xxiii. xxiv. 11–24, where the non-intrusion principles of the primitive Church are very pointedly brought out; so also in Gillespie, referred to below. *Jus Div. Minist. Evang.* Part i. chaps. viii. ix. Poole, *Quo Warranto*, Lond. 1658, chaps. xii. xiii. Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. viii. Digress. i. Prop. iii.: *Miscell. Quest.* chap. ii. [Apollonii, *Jus Majest.* Pars i. Sect. ii. cap. i. *The Plea of Presbytery*, Glasg. 1840, pp. 5–25. Cunningham. *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 189–196, iii. pp. 534–545, iv. pp. 290–565.]

CHAPTER II.

APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

IN considering the subject of the title to the ministerial office, the conclusions at which we arrived were briefly these: *First*, the minister of Christ, as peculiarly and emphatically Christ's, has his title to the office primarily and directly from Him, the call of the Divine Head of the Church alone conferring a right to the possession of office in the Church. That call is an inward one, expressed to the individual himself, by the bestowment on him from Christ of those special gifts and graces which qualify for the ministry in the Church, the endowments for the office, when conferred, being an intimation that the person so endowed is chosen to the office. *Second*, in all ordinary circumstances the outward call of the Church must be added to the inward call of its Head, in order to give a man a title to enter upon the exercise of the ministerial office: there must be, first, Christ speaking to the soul of the man by a secret voice, heard only by himself; and, added to this, there must be Christ speaking to the same man through the public voice of the Church, heard by all, before he may assume to himself the right to advance to the work of the ministry. This second call is expressed to the individual through the solemn investiture with office bestowed by the Church in ordination,—the act of the Church in setting a man apart to the work of the ministry not conferring on him his title to the office, but being a public acknowledgment that the title already belongs to him in virtue of the choice of its Divine Head, and forming the last step necessary, in ordinary circumstances, to carry that choice into effect. *Third*, the call of the Church and the call of its Head must be supplemented by one further element in order to constitute and make up the pastoral title; and that additional element is the call of the people. Over and above the right to dispense Word and Sacrament at large, wherever Providence may

open up his way, conferred upon a man by the ministerial title, the pastoral office implies a peculiar relationship to a particular congregation; and this relationship cannot lawfully be formed without the third element, or the call of the people.

There is a well-marked and important distinction, not to be overlooked without great detriment to the argument, between those three calls. The *first*, or the call of the Head of the Church, is necessary as a safeguard against human presumption, which would interfere with the service of Christ in His Church, lest a man should take to himself the office of the ministry at his own hand, or at the bidding of man, and so run unbidden and unsent. Because he is called of Christ, His minister is "the servant, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ."[1] The *second*, or the public call of the office-bearers of the Church, is necessary as a safeguard against individual fanaticism, and vain pretensions on the part of any one to a Divine and extraordinary call from Christ, where none such is given. Ordination by the Church is the public acknowledgment on the part of its office-bearers that they believe that the call from Christ, laid claim to on the part of the person ordained, is a real call, and not merely his own mistaken impression or fanatical belief of one; and that, as the office-bearers of Christ, they feel constrained to recognise the choice made by their Master, and to carry it into effect by solemnly setting apart the individual to the work of the ministry in His Church. The *third*, or the call of the members of the congregation, is necessary as a safeguard against the encroachment by the office-bearers of the Church on the spiritual rights and liberties of the people. The necessity for the call of the flock, before bestowing the pastoral character or constituting the pastoral relationship, is the security that the office-bearers of the Church shall not establish, in the exercise of their right to ordain, a lordship over God's heritage.[2]

Such are the general positions which Scripture warrants us to lay down on the subject of the ministerial title. These principles are controverted by two opposite parties,—by those who would add other conditions as necessary to constitute the ministerial title besides the call of Christ and of the office-bearers of Christ, and by those who deny that the conditions now named are both of them essential to the ministerial title. On the one side we have the doctrine of

[1] Gal. i. 1. [2] [Litton, *Church of Christ*, Lond. 1851, pp. 588–599.]

the Romanists and of High Churchmen in general, who hold that, over and above the joint call of Christ and the Church's office-bearers, there is needed, to complete the ministerial title, an uninterrupted ecclesiastical descent and commission, derived lineally from the Apostles; or, in other words, that "apostolical succession" is another element necessary to the validity of the ministerial title, over and above the call of Christ and the sanction by the office-bearers of the Church. And, on the other side, there is the doctrine of the Independents, who deny that the call of the office-bearers of the Church is necessary, in ordinary circumstances, to complete the ministerial or pastoral title, and who account ordination by the Church as not itself of any essential force in making up the warrant of an individual to enter upon the office and work of the ministry. The general principles which we have already laid down are accounted by one of these parties to be erroneous in the way of defect, and by the other to be erroneous in the way of excess. High Churchmen hold that, without the addition of apostolical succession, every other warrant is insufficient to entitle a man to the ministerial office. Independents hold that a man is entitled to assume the office of the ministry without waiting for the call of the office-bearers of the Church in the shape of ordination at their hands. The doctrine of the Independents on this subject we must reserve for future discussion. The doctrine of High Churchmen, whether Popish or Episcopalian, we shall now proceed to deal with. There are two preliminary remarks which it is necessary to make, in order distinctly to understand the point at issue between the friends and the opponents of apostolical succession as necessary to the ministerial title.

The first remark to be made is, that the doctrine of apostolical succession, as essential to the validity of the ministerial title, is not necessarily connected with the Popish or Prelatic form of Church government, but may be maintained along with a Presbyterian creed. In point of fact, indeed, the theory of apostolical succession has seldom or—with but one or two singular and *outré* exceptions—never been held by Presbyterians in connection with the ministerial title, but has been almost exclusively maintained by High Churchmen, either Popish or Prelatic.[1] But there is

[1] It is not the doctrine of the Church of England in her authorized formularies, although common enough among her members, and deriving some

nothing in the nature of the doctrine to render this absolutely necessary. An ecclesiastical descent through the channel of presbyters is quite as possible a thing as an ecclesiastical succession through popes and prelates; although, practically, few or no Presbyterians have ever asserted such a claim.[1] The question of the form of Church government established in the Church is not necessarily connected, therefore, with the present subject of apostolical succession; and the question of apostolical succession, as necessary or not to the ministerial title, may be argued without entering upon the debate of what form of government has actually been established by Christ in His Church. This latter point, or the government of the Church by popes or prelates or presbyters, is a matter reserved for after consideration. The question before us at present is as to the necessity or non-necessity of an outward ecclesiastical succession, in one shape or other, from the Apostles to give validity to the ecclesiastical title.

The second remark to be attended to in proceeding to deal with the question of apostolical succession is, that there is a most important difference—although one constantly forgotten by the adherents of this doctrine—between the succession of a Christian ministry generally from the days of the Apostles down to our own, and the succession of this or the other minister individually. There is a vast difference between the unbroken ecclesiastical descent of the order, as an order, and the unbroken ecclesiastical descent of individuals belonging to the order, as individuals. There cannot be a doubt that the office of the ministry, as an office, has existed without interruption from the days of the Apostles to the present time, and that the office has been filled from age to age by men ordained and set apart to its duties. The ministry, embracing an order of men to discharge its duties, is a standing institution in the Christian Church since its first establishment until now; and Leslie, in his *Short Method with the Deists*, has fairly and justly appealed to the uninterrupted existence of the office as a standing and permanent monument of

apparent support from the fact that the ordinal makes episcopal ordination necessary for all who wish to hold office within her pale, though without pronouncing whether or not it is necessary *per se*, and except as a matter of ecclesiastical arrangement and order. [See Dean Goode's *Vind. of the Doct. of the Church of Engl. on the Validity of the Orders of the Scotch and Foreign Non-Episcopal Churches*, Lond. 1852.]

[1] [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 32.]

the great primary facts of Christianity, and therefore as demonstrative evidence of its truth. But to attribute—as can justly be done—an unbroken succession in this sense to the office, is a very different thing from attributing the same unbroken succession to any man who now holds the office. That the office has existed and been filled from the days of the Apostles until now, may be admitted; but that any individual now holding the office can trace back his own ordination to it through the successive ordinations of previous men in uninterrupted succession up to the Apostles, may be fairly denied. There may have been—there *must* have been—breaks in the chain, fatal to the individual succession, although not fatal to the general succession of the order. There may have been interruptions and invalidities connected with the ordination of individual bishops or ministers at any one time, so as to break the line of succession with regard to those claiming descent from them individually, while there may have been no interruptions or invalidities connected with the ordination of *all* the bishops and *all* the ministers in the Church at any one time, so as to break the line of succession universally, or in regard to the ministry itself.[1] There is an important difference between these two things as bearing upon the question of apostolical succession; and yet it is a difference which the advocates of the doctrine almost constantly overlook in their argument.[2]

I. In regard, then, to the general question of apostolical succession as necessary to the validity of the ministerial title, or—as most of the adherents of the doctrine maintain—as necessary to the essence of a Church,[3] I remark in the first place, that no

[1] A web of cloth—to use a homely comparison—composed of a million of threads and eighteen hundred yards long, is not broken as a whole, unless all the threads be cut across at one place. But if any one thread out of the million be cut anywhere, the electric current is for ever prevented from passing in that line.

[2] Whately, *Kingdom of Christ*, 4th ed. Lond. 1845. pp. 235–237.

[3] [Mr. Palmer is even disposed to consider Archbishop Laud somewhat latitudinarian in his charity, in thinking (Controv. with Fisher, p. 315) that only very obstinate and leading Dissenters will be lost, while more subordinate and ignorant ones may even "be in a state of salvation." "This last clause," says Mr. Palmer, "should be received with some caution, and be understood rather to imply a pious and charitable *hope* and opinion than any absolute certainty. It is true that defect of knowledge diminishes or removes the guilt of sin. Hence we may infer that those who maintain heretical doctrines in ignorance are in a very different condition from those who forsake the light of the truth; but still, if a society has separated itself, or been legiti-

statements of Scripture can be alleged in favour of such a doctrine, but rather the reverse.

There are a number of Scripture declarations that give promise of the permanence and perpetuity of the Church, and declarations also that give promise of the permanence and perpetuity of a ministry in the Church, which have been appropriated and perverted by the advocates of apostolical succession into arguments in favour of the doctrine. The promise of our Lord to be with His Church, or the ministers of His Church, even to the last—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (or of the dispensation)"—has been turned and misinterpreted to the purpose of establishing the doctrine of a continued and unbroken succession of ministers in an individual line since the apostolical age. The promise of perpetuity to the Church—"Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—has also been misapplied to the same purpose. In short, most of those Scripture statements which afford us the warrant to say that there shall be a Church always on this earth, and that the office of minister and pastor is a standing appointment in the Church, have been pressed into

mately separated by the whole Church of Christ for heresy, its members are not in the way of salvation pointed out by Jesus Christ. They and their generations are as the heathen; and though we may have reason to believe that many of their descendants are not obstinate in their errors, still it seems to me that we are not warranted in affirming absolutely that they can be saved." . . . "To the Catholic and Apostolical Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland, every individual within their district is bound to unite himself, as being exclusively and solely the way of salvation established by Divine authority amongst us." "The Church of England does not hesitate to denounce those who separate from her as guilty of most grievous sin. Her canons pronounce, that 'whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the Apostles' rules in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood,' —accounting the Church of England unfit to be joined with in Christian profession,—shall be excommunicated, and not restored till 'after their repentance and public revocation of such their *wicked errors*' (Canon ix. 1603). Those even who maintain such schismatics, and allow them the name of a Christian Church, are equally excommunicated by the Church of England (Canon x.)."—*Treatise on the Church*, Lond. 1838, vol. i. pp. 109 f., 214, 218. This sweeping condemnation, it may be observed by the way, includes not only Presbyterians and Nonconformists, but also all English, Irish, and Scotch Romanists, on the ground mainly of certain defects in the apostolical succession of their bishops, which Mr. Palmer is prepared to establish. Vol. i. pp. 241–245, 253 f., 568, 576 f.; ii. 336–368, 431, etc. Compare also Keble, *Serm.* App. pp. 95 ff., and his Preface to Hooker, pp. li.–lxxvii. Wordsworth, *Theoph. Angl.* 8th ed. Lond. 1863, pp. 84, 212 f. *Tracts for the Times*, passim.]

the service of the theory, that an apostolical succession in the line of each individual minister is essential to the validity of the ministerial title, and, as most if not all its advocates hold, essential also to the existence of a Church at all. Now, with regard to such statements of Scripture, it may readily be admitted —nay, it is to be strenuously affirmed—that they demonstrate this much, that a Church of Christ, more or less visible, is always to exist on earth; but this conclusion has nothing to do with the question of an apostolical succession in that Church. Further still, many of these texts may be held as demonstrating that the office of the ministry is a standing and permanent one in the Church, and that never at any time, throughout the universal Christian society and in all the branches of the Christian Church, will the office of the ministry become extinct through the interruption or invalidity of the ordination of those who hold it. But neither does this latter conclusion in the smallest measure go to substantiate the doctrine of an unbroken ecclesiastical succession in the line of individual ministers. There are not a few statements in Scripture that justify us in believing that the office of the ministry in the Church can never, as an office, become extinct; that an order of men set apart to its public duties can never, as an order, be interrupted and come to an end, so long as the Church itself endures. But there are no statements in Scripture applicable to the case of either individual Churches or individual ministers, and which prove that the ecclesiastical succession in regard to such may not be interrupted and brought to a fatal termination. On the contrary, in regard both to particular Churches and also to particular ministers, there are statements in Scripture to the very opposite effect. There are threatenings of judgment against particular Churches which, as in the case of the seven Churches of Asia, we know to have been fatally executed in their utter ruin and extinction; and there are statements likewise in regard to particular ministers, that distinctly enough intimate that there are false teachers as well as true who have been ordained into office in the Church, and that, in the persons of those who "have not been of God,"[1] the line of apostolical succession of individual ministers has been broken, and the candlestick has been removed out of its place.[2]

II. There are no precedents or analogies in Scripture in

[1] 1 John iv. 1, 4, 6.

[2] [See above, pp. 39 f., 51–53.]

favour of the doctrine of an apostolical succession as necessary to the validity of the ministry, but rather the reverse.

The advocates of the theory of apostolical succession have been accustomed to refer, in confirmation of their views, to the example afforded by the Jewish dispensation. Under that economy, the office of the priest descended by regular succession from father to son in the family of Aaron, the precise line being marked out by Divine appointment, and provision being made by Divine promise against any failure in the succession; and this case has been frequently appealed to in behalf of the doctrine which maintains that a like principle in regard to the succession of ministers is to be found under the Gospel dispensation. It is hardly necessary, in answer to such a plea, to remark that the succession of the priestly office in the family of Aaron was but a type of the priestly office of Christ, and that the right of the first-born in Aaron's house to minister before God in the sanctuary on behalf of the congregation was no more than a picture by anticipation of the right of Christ, as "the first-born among many brethren," to act on their behalf as mediator with God. The circumstances of the ministry under the Gospel are wholly unlike the circumstances of the priests under the law. The priests under the law inherited their office by the law of ordinary generation; the ministers under the Gospel by the call of Christ, special and extraordinary. The successors of Aaron ministered at the altar in virtue of natural birthright; the successors of the Apostles in virtue of a spiritual appointment. So far from the example of the Jewish priesthood affording a Scripture precedent or analogy applicable to the case of the Gospel ministry, it affords an argument the other way. We know from Scripture, that the principles that had predominated in and given form and fashion to the Jewish Church as a ceremonial system were to be reversed, not imitated, in the Christian Church. Under the latter, neither the place of members nor the office of ministers was to be conferred "according to the law of a carnal commandment;" they were to be regulated by no considerations of mere natural birth or ecclesiastical extraction. "Think not," said the forerunner of the new economy, "think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."[1]

[1] Matt. iii. 9.

III. Scripture principles, clear and decisive, forbid the doctrine of those who maintain that an apostolical succession in the line of individual ministers is necessary to the validity of the ministerial title, and necessary also to the validity of ordinances in the Church.

The inconsistency of such a doctrine with Scripture principles may be demonstrated in two ways: 1*st*, It is not true, as is assumed in the doctrine of apostolical succession, that the Church has received any deposit of grace from Christ, which it is empowered to communicate from one age to another, and from one succession to another of its ministers. The whole doctrine of apostolical succession, and of the necessity of it to the validity of ordination and the existence of a true Church, is founded on this assumption. The theory proceeds on the idea that the Apostles originally received from Christ, and conferred on those ordained by them, a certain deposit or gift of grace at the moment of the ordination, with powers also to communicate it to those whom they in turn should ordain; that ministers, once consecrated, became the medium of transmitting this gift to their successors from age to age from the apostolic day until our own; that on this gift, so imparted, the right to the ministerial office and the virtue and authority of all its ministrations depend; and that this spiritual deposit or inheritance is so handed down, irrespective of the moral and spiritual character of bishop or minister, and in point of fact belongs, in virtue of ecclesiastical succession, as much to a Beaton or a Sharp as to a Hamilton or a Knox.[1] Now, setting aside other difficulties connected with such a theory, the grand principle involved in it is, that Christ has actually committed to the Church a deposit of grace and authority and spiritual virtue, communicable by the Church to its own office-bearers, according to certain conditions and through a certain channel. This is the fundamental principle which lies at the

[1] [" To create ministers by imposing hands, is to give them not only power and leave to preach the Word and dispense the Sacraments, but also *the grace of the Holy Ghost*, to make them able to execute both parts of their function. *This can none give but they that first received the same*," etc.—Bishop Bilson, *Perpet. Gov. of Christ's Church*, p. 160. *Cf.* the words of the bishop in the ordinal: " Receive thou the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest," etc. Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, vol. i. pp. 239; ii. 441, etc. Goode, *Rule of Faith*, Lond. 1842, vol. ii. pp. 49, 73 f. Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. v. 13. Bishop Jewel, *Defense of the Apologie*, Lond. 1570, 16 Junii, pp. 146–150. Nitzsch, *prot. Beant. der Symb.*, Möhler's, Hamburg 1835. pp. 209, 224.]

basis of the doctrine of apostolical succession, and is essential to it as a doctrine; and this principle is wholly opposed to the statements of Scripture on the subject. Christ has not surrendered up His priestly functions—nor, indeed, any part of His office as Mediator—to the Church. He has not given out of His own hand any deposit of spiritual grace into the hands of the Church, communicable by the Church through an ecclesiastical channel to its members. "Christ still worketh hitherto, and will work," as the only and ever-present Head of His Church, giving forth directly from Himself day by day the gifts that both office-bearers and members need, keeping ministers in immediate communication with Himself, as the source of all the grace they can receive or convey, and keeping people in direct dependence on Himself for all the spiritual blessing which, through His ordinances, they enjoy. In one word, Christ has not abdicated any part of His function as the ever-living and ever-active administrator from age to age and from hour to hour of the Church's provision of spiritual grace, giving to ministers and to members out of His own hand their daily supply; and He has not permitted His Apostles at first—far less ministers as their successors in every age—to enjoy themselves, or to communicate to others, saving and spiritual blessings apart from the gifts given immediately from Himself.

There is no exception to this universal law—namely, that Christ gives from His own hand, and not through the hand of others, all spiritual and saving grace—even in the case of those extraordinary gifts which were actually imparted in primitive times by the laying on of the Apostles' hands on the early disciples. The gifts so imparted were neither spiritual nor saving, but extraordinary and miraculous, that might have been enjoyed, and were actually enjoyed, by not a few not spiritually and savingly benefited by them. Nor is there an exception to the law, that not through the hands of others, but from His own, does Christ ever impart spiritual grace to His people, in the fact that an outward ministry and outward ordinance, dispensed by the hands of ministers, are made a blessing savingly to the souls of many. The ministry and the outward ordinances of the Church are blessed in the experience of souls, only by bringing these souls to Christ to be blessed by Him. They become instruments of spiritual benefit to men, only by bringing men into communication and contact with Christ to be spiritually benefited by Him.

There is no virtue in such ordinances or in such a ministry, except in so far as they bring men under "the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them who by faith receive them."[1] There is no deposit of grace in the Church communicable by one succession of the ministry to another, and handed down from age to age. The universal law of the Christian Church is, that not through the hands of others, but from His own, Christ gives every good and perfect gift unto His people.[2]

2d, It is not true, as is assumed in the doctrine of apostolical succession, that the gift of the ministry has been conferred exclusively on the office-bearers of the Christian Church, or that the Church is dependent entirely on a particular order of men for the existence and continuance of the ministry.

This is a second assumption, necessary to the theory of apostolical succession, but utterly opposed to Scripture principles. It is not true that Christ has bestowed a deposit of grace on the Church at large, to be communicated and transmitted from hand to hand and from generation to generation of the Church. Still less is it true that Christ has communicated a deposit of grace to the ministry, as a distinct order in the Church, separate from and to the exclusion of the members, to be transmitted from hand to hand, by means of ordination, from the Apostles' day down to the end of the world. The great and fundamental principle, enunciated and established at a previous stage in our discussions, that the proper *subject* in which Church power primarily resides is not the office-bearers exclusively, nor the members exclusively, but the office-bearers and the members together, and that it inheres in each according to their respective character and place in the Church, is obviously applicable here. The gift of the ministry has not been committed to the ministers exclusively, apart and contradistinguished from the members of the Church, although the *exercise* of the ministry has been committed to them. The ministerial office is one of those gifts of Church power which have been committed to the Church at large to hold in possession, although it has been committed to the office-bearers of the Church to hold for the exercise of it. And so far is it from being true that a separate order of men in the Church both hold the ministerial office to the exclusion of the Church at large, and also have the sole power to transmit and communicate the office to others, that

[1] Shorter Catechism, qu. 91. [2] [See above, pp. 194–200, 206–208.]

the Scriptures seem to lay down the very opposite doctrine. The Scriptures teach us, according to the language of the Confession of Faith, that "Unto the catholic visible Church,"—meaning by the visible Church, according to the definition of it previously given, "all throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children,"—"unto the catholic visible Church Christ has given the *ministry*," as well as "the oracles and ordinances of God."[1] They teach us, that not in a distinct and privileged order in the Church, but in the Church collectively, the right of possession of the ministerial office resides; and that, so far from a distinct and privileged order having the exclusive right to give it to others, they do not exclusively possess it themselves. They teach us, moreover, that the call of Christ to any member of the Church gives him the right individually to the office; and that, on his application to the office-bearers of the Church for that object, it is their duty to proceed by ordination to give him the additional right to the exercise of the office. All this the Scriptures appear very decidedly to lay down; and it is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of the advocates of apostolical succession, when they tell us that the exclusive right to the ecclesiastical office, both as regards the possession and the exercise of it, belongs to a privileged class, and that upon them the Church is absolutely dependent for the ministry, and for ordinances being kept up and administered from age to age. Such a doctrine just reverses the true theory of the relations of the Church to the office-bearers of the Church. It makes the Church depend upon the ministry, instead of the ministry depending on the Church. The body of believers, the collective society of Christians, which we call the Church, has all the powers and privileges within itself and inherently belonging to it, as given day after day by Christ Himself, which are necessary to its being and wellbeing. The ministry or office-bearers are but the organs of the Church for doing its work. The individuals in the ministry who do this work are selected from time to time out of the body of believers by the call of Christ, giving them the title individually to that office, which primarily belongs to the Church collectively; and even although the ministry were to become extinct in its present possessors, or the individuals who fill its offices apostate, the Church would have in itself the powers necessary to repair the loss, the

[1] Conf. chap. xxv. 3.

ministerial office would still belong to it in possession, and by the act of its members, choosing out men to whom Christ had already given gifts for the ministry and a call to it, the Church might lawfully set apart others to the office that had been left vacant.[1] It is not true, if we are to judge by Scripture principles, that Christ has committed the ministerial office exclusively to a distinct class of men, or left the Christian Church to depend on them alone for the existence and continuance of the ministry.

The general principles now laid down appear to be borne out by Scripture, and they overturn from its foundations the extravagant and intolerant doctrine by which the advocates of apostolical succession would unchurch every religious society except the Popish or the Episcopal Church, would restrict the Divine blessing to a ministry in the line of their so-called "apostolical succession," and would declare that ministers without prelatic ordination have no right to preach the Gospel or administer the Sacraments of

[1] *Le ministère ordinaire n'est pas absolument nécessaire à l'Eglise pour naître, mais il lui est extrêmement nécessaire pour la faire croître, et pour empêcher qu'elle ne tombe en ruine. Car quand les fidèles n'auraient point de pasteurs, ils ne laisseraient pas d'être joints en société, puisque c'est la foy et la grâce qui les unissent, et non le ministère. Et comme dans la société civile c'est la nature et non le magistrat qui unit les hommes, et en suite les hommes estant unis en société le magistrat est pevvinst par la raison de l'ordre et par la nécessité de la conservation de la société, de sorte que c'est la société qui produit le magistrat et non le magistrat qui produit la société; ainsy de mesme, la foy et la grâce assemblent les hommes dans une société religieuse, ce sont elles qui font l'Eglise, et puis le ministère naît en suite par la raison de l'ordre, et pour aider à la conservation de l'Eglise; et ainsi naturellement c'est l'Eglise qui produit le ministère ordinaire, et non le ministère ordinaire qui produit l'Eglise.*

Cette mesme nature, ou pour mieux dire, cette mesme Providence qui assemble les hommes en société civile, et qui leur ordonne en les unissant ensemble d'entretenir cette société par un ordre raisonnable et leur donne-t-elle pour ce mesme sujet, et par cette mesme voye, les moyens, les ministres, et les officiers qui leur sont nécessaires, pour les gouverner et pour faire exécuter les loix de la société, d'avoir des juges pour terminer les différens, d'avoir des remèdes pour la guérison des maladies, et des artisans pour la commodité publique? Et ne servit-il pas une absurdité que de demander à un peuple, quel droit il a d'avoir des magistrats, des juges, des médecins, des artisans, des dépositaires du commerce, des fonctionnaires, puis qu'il n'y apparoît rien de droit plus grand ni plus clair que celuy qui est fondé sur la raison de l'ordre, et sur la seule nature? L'Eglise est une société religieuse composée de plusieurs personnes que Dieu luy-mesme a assemblées pour vivre ensemble, non en confusion, mais en ordre; il veut que cette société subsiste; il luy ordonne de s'entretenir et de se conserver; il luy en suggère luy-mesme les moyens. *Il luy donne donc sans doute par cette mesme loy de nature des directeurs pour la gouverner, des pasteurs pour les mener dans les pâturages ordonnés de l'Ecriture, des ministères pour luy dispenser les Sacremens Divins qu'il a institués, des gardes et des guides pour veiller pour elle, et pour marcher devant elle.*"—Claude, *Défense de la Réf.*, Leeuwarde 1745, pp. 840, 845.

Christ. It is needless to take the trouble of testing the hardihood of such a doctrine by the standard of history, or to appeal to the records of the past to show that, on such a principle, no Church on earth can be secure that it possesses a rightly constituted and commissioned ministry at the present day. "There is not," says Archbishop Whately, in reference to the bearing of the historical argument on the doctrine of apostolical succession; "there is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree."[1] But without reference to the argument that might easily be brought from history to confound the pretensions of the advocates of apostolical succession, the Scripture principles of a general kind now laid down are sufficient to evince their fallacy.

It is a fundamental and most mischievous error to suppose

[1] Whately, *Kingdom of Christ*, 4th ed. p. 231.—(It would be superfluous to go into the details of the "fables and endless genealogies" on which, historically, this doctrine is built, and which assuredly "minister questions rather than godly edifying." For some curious specimens of information in relation, and of the branches which have taken place in the line of apostolical succession, even in our own country and in modern times, I may refer to Brown, *Letters on Puseyite Episcopacy*, Edin. 1841, pp. 245–267; Empie, *Prelatical Doctrine of Apostolical Succession*, Boston 1841, pp. 113–128, 200–224. The conclusion is a very obvious one, that if such pedigrees can be proved to have occurred in times of great enlightenment and circumspection, numberless breaches must have taken place in ages of almost universal ignorance and ignorance. And as to it remembered that the monumental value of the whole line is utterly and for ever nullified by a single breach in any part of it. "If a bishop," says Archbishop Whately, "has not been duly consecrated, or has not been previously rightly ordained, his ordinations are null; and so are the consecrations of those ordained by him; and their ordinations of others; and so on, without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite and irremediable extent. . . We read of bishops consecrated when mere children—of men officiating who barely knew their letters (of many, he might have added, who never pretended to know them)—of parishes organized, and others put in their places by violence—of illiterate and profligate laymen and habitual drunkards admitted to holy orders; and, in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder and reckless disregard of the decency which the apostle enjoins. It is unnecessarily that any one quite accidentally acquainted with history can feel a confidence, or any approach to confidence, that amidst all this confusion and corruption every requisite form was in every instance strictly adhered to by men, many of them openly profane and unlearned, and countenanced by public opinion through the gross ignorance of the populace among which they lived, and that no one was duly consecrated or ordained who was admitted to sacred offices. . . It is not without cause that the advocates of this theory dread and loathe the age of free inquiry, and wish to involve religion in 'a mystery and awful gloom.' It is not without cause that, having removed the Christian's confidence from a rock, to one in an mud, they forbid all prying curiosity to examine their foundation."—Pp. 242, 243.

that the entire body of believers constituting the Church of Christ have been left to depend exclusively for the existence of a ministry and Gospel ordinances among them on a certain exclusive body of men called ministers; or that the spiritual edification of the people, in so far as that can be secured and promoted by the outward provisions of the Church, is at the mercy of a particular order of its office-bearers. The principles embodied in the question of the right of the Church at large to the ministry and to ordinances, instead of the right being inherent in its office-bearers alone, were fully debated and brought out at the period of the Reformation, in the controversy between the adherents of the Papacy on the one hand—who asserted that the Churches of the Reformation, by their secession from Rome, had denuded themselves of a lawful ministry and valid ordinances—and Protestants on the other hand, who asserted the validity of their own ministry and Churches, notwithstanding of their secession. It is true that, in the case of not a few of the Churches of the Reformation, it could be argued that the ecclesiastical succession had not been broken, but preserved, and that the office of the ministry was continued through the crisis of the Reformation by means of men who were previously ordained in the Church of Rome, and brought with them their ordination into the Protestant Churches. But although this argument could to a large extent be borne out historically as true in the case of many Reformed Churches, as in our own Church, yet the broad and fundamental principle already laid down was the grand argument of the Reformers against their Popish assailants. It is not the ministry that makes the Church, but the Church that makes the ministry. It may be true—and we believe it is sanctioned by Scripture—that in all ordinary cases men ought to be ordained to the ministry by those ordained before. But it is no less true, that in extraordinary cases this may not be possible, and may not be required by Scripture. Is, therefore, the office of the ministry in such a case extinct, so that it cannot be revived? Not so. Wherever there is a body of believers in Christ, there there is a Christian Church. Wherever there is a Christian Church, there belong to that Church within itself—because Christ is within it—all the powers necessary for its own being and wellbeing; it has within itself the ministerial office, and a right to the exercise of it, along with all the other gifts, many and precious, which Christ has bestowed. And if circumstances

should forbid to it the use of the ordinary and regular methods for ordaining to the ministry, the Church is at liberty and has the power to restore the office, and constitute a ministry for itself.[1] This was the answer of the Reformers to the Popish Church, when that Church denied the validity of Protestant ordination and Sacraments. And this is the true and conclusive answer to the advocates of apostolical succession at all times, when they would deny the validity of the ministerial title not sanctified by a Popish or Prelatic pedigree.

[1] See especially Claude's thoroughly satisfactory and scientific treatment of this point, *Def. de la Réf.* 4me Partie, chap. iii. 6 ff. Engl. Transl. Lond. 1683; Part. iv. pp. 52–83. Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. ii. 2, 3. etc. Turrettin. *Op.* tom. iii. loc. xviii. qu. xiii. 16–23, qu. xxv. Whately, *Kingdom of Christ*, 4th ed. pp. 230–244. [Litton, *Church of Christ*, Lond. 1851, pp. 558–576. Smyth, *Prelatical Doctrine of Apostolical Succession*, Boston 1841. *Presbytery not Prelacy the Scriptural and Primitive Polity*, Charleston 1843, pp. 43–48. Goode, *Rule of Faith*, Lond. 1842, vol. ii. pp. 72–132. Kostlin, *Luther's Lehre von der Kirche*, Stuttgart 1853, pp. 52, etc. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 27–32, vol. iii. pp. 536 f. *Plea of Presbytery*, Glasgow 1840, pp. 64–93. Lord Macaulay, *Essays*, Lond. 1850, pp. 479–485.]

CHAPTER III.

THE INDEPENDENT THEORY OF THE MINISTRY.

THERE are two things necessary in order to complete the ministerial title: first, the call by the Head of the Church, and second, a call by the office-bearers of the Church. The first of these, or a call by the Head of the Church to the office of the ministry, gives the primary and superior right; but in ordinary circumstances, even that call requires to be supplemented by the secondary and subordinate right which is conferred by a call from the office-bearers of the Church. The act of the latter, when they proceed by ordination to set apart an individual to the ministry, is the public recognition, on their part, of the previous call which he has received from Christ, and their designation or admission of him into office in consequence. There are various analogies in ordinary life which help to illustrate the necessity which we affirm exists for the right conferred by the call of Christ being, in all ordinary cases, supplemented by the secondary and inferior right conferred by the call of the office-bearers of the Church, before an individual can complete his title to the ministerial office. Take, for example, the familiar instance of a man's title to an estate, and there is seen the same kind of distinction which applies to the ministerial title. There is a right of property and a right of possession known in law; and the one is needed to supplement the other, in order to complete the title to the estate.[1] There is the higher and primary right, conferred, it may be, by immediate grant from the superior,—the right of property. But another party may be in the enjoyment of the estate; and my right of property must be supplemented by a right of possession, conferred by a court of law, before I can enter upon the actual exercise of my right of property, and complete my title to the estate. Or take the no less familiar example of a man's title to some office

[1] [Blackstone, *Commentaries*, b. ii. chap. 13.]

under the Crown,—such as the magistracy. The first and superior right is conferred by the commission of the Crown; but the second and subordinate right, which is nevertheless necessary to supplement the former, is conferred by the act of the magistrates previously in office when they receive and record the commission of the sovereign, and, in accordance with it, admit the bearer of that commission into the magistracy. Both the act of the Crown and the act of the bench of magistrates are necessary to complete his title to the office, and enable him to enter upon the exercise of it. And so with the office of the ministry. The right to it "*in esse*" is conferred by the act of Christ calling an individual to the office. The right to it "*in operari*" is conferred by the act of the office-bearers of the Church ordaining the same individual to the office. These two rights complete the ministerial title, and warrant a man to enter upon the work of the ministry: and the call of Christ and the call of the Church conferring these two rights are both necessary in ordinary cases to make up the full title.

And it is not difficult to see how these two calls come to meet in the case of the same individual, and to work harmoniously together in setting apart the chosen person to the ministerial office. Both calls ultimately are derived from Christ. The first call comes from Christ directly, and is expressed to the individual by the bestowment upon him of gifts and graces for office. The second call also comes from Christ, although indirectly, when Christ moves the office-bearers of the Church to select the very man whom He has Himself before selected, and overrules them to ordain to the ministry the individual whom He has previously qualified by gifts and endowments for the work. It is thus that the two calls, first, of the Head of the Church, and second, of the office-bearers of the Church, meet in one person, and together make up his complete title to the ministerial office.

We have already considered the theory of those parties who maintain that, over and above these two conditions necessary to make the ministerial title complete, a third must be added—namely, a commission derived by unbroken ecclesiastical succession from the Apostles. It is but right to say that this doctrine of apostolical succession is not the doctrine laid down in the Articles of the Church of England, however often and strongly it has been advocated, more especially in later times, by her ministers, and what-

ever countenance it may appear to derive from her ordination service. In the twenty-third article, the Church of England says: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." This cautious and restricted language is very different indeed from that used by the majority of her representatives in the present day; and, as Bishop Burnet tells us, it was selected and employed for the very purpose of avoiding any declaration on the theory of apostolical succession, or any implied censure upon other forms of ministry or other Churches, and also under the consciousness, "that all things among themselves had not gone according to those rules that ought to be sacred in regular times."[1] It certainly does not embody the doctrine that a commission from the Apostles, handed down in unbroken succession, is a necessary element in the validity of the ministerial title.

But the positions which we have laid down on the subject of the ministerial title are impugned, not merely by those who, like the advocates of apostolical succession, hold that they err on the side of defect, but also by Independents, who maintain that they err on the side of excess. The Independents assert that the call of the office-bearers of the Church is not necessary to constitute the ministerial title; that the right to the office of the ministry and to the exercise of all its functions belongs essentially to all the members of the Church equally; and that it is no more than a matter of order and arrangement that one man should be set apart by the rest to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments on their behalf. According to their theory, the election by the members of the Church, and not the appointment by the office-bearers, is the act that invests a man with the ministerial title: by virtue of the choice of the people, and his own consent to the choice, he has authority given him to discharge all the duties and exercise all the authority of the ministry. And the call of the office-bearers is no part of the process through which, in ordinary circumstances, a man is made a minister of the Gospel.

[1] Burnet, *Expos. of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Oxf. 1845, pp. 286–290.

"When," says Dr. Davidson in his work on the *Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament*; "when a number of believers come together for the worship of God and mutual edification, one person may be selected to preach to or to exhort the rest on the occasion. It is the inherent right of every man to preach the Gospel; and the person so selected may feel strongly prompted to comply. At another period some other believer may be selected at the time of assembling to address the brethren. . . . . The election of him by the brethren constitutes him their office-bearer. Whenever he accepts the position to which he has been invited by a Church of Christ in the free exercise of their judgment, he possesses a full title to do whatever pertains to the new situation. He has a right to discharge all the acts appropriate to the office to which he has been chosen. He is invested with all the authority of office."[1]

In entire accordance with this system, which places the election by the members of the Church in the room of the call by the office-bearers of the Church, ordination is no proper part of the process by which a man becomes invested with the ministerial title. By many of the Independent Churches the ceremony of ordination is entirely discarded; while by those of them who retain it, it is regarded, not as the act of the Church setting apart an individual to office, but simply as the act of the members and office-bearers in alike uniting together in prayer for a blessing upon the office previously conferred by election of the members. "The essence of ordination," says Dr. Davidson, "is in the solemn invocation of the Divine presence and assistance. The Divine power is implored on behalf of the person on whom hands are usually laid." "It is not the inducting of an office-bearer into an office which he did not possess until that precise time, but a formal and solemn commendation of him to the Head of the Church, when about to enter on the actual discharge of the functions included in office. As soon as he is called by the members of a Church to be their bishop or deacon, and consents to the invitation, he really becomes their bishop or deacon."[2] After ordination has, in the Independent system, been thus made to consist of nothing more than the public prayer of the Church for the minister elected, and his investiture with the office has been

[1] Davidson, *Eccles. Pol. of the New Test.* Lond. 1848, pp. 267, 221 f.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 221.

resolved into his election by the members, it is but part of the same theory to hold, that one or more of the people have in themselves the power of ordination. "Several believers may ordain," says Dr. Davidson, "in the name of a Church, or even one deputed on behalf of his brethren. The act of one person veritably becomes the act of all the disciples."[1]

Now, in endeavouring to estimate the merits of this system, there are two preliminary remarks which, to prevent confusion in the argument, it seems desirable to make.

I. There is a certain office or duty which all Christians must discharge in the way of teaching, exhorting, and admonishing one another, distinct and separate from the teaching of ministers, set apart officially to the work.

There are many passages of Scripture which lay upon private believers the duty of ministering in the way of doctrine and instruction to all whom they can so profit, which yet come very far short of enjoining that all private Christians should take upon them the work of the public ministry. It is very common with the advocates of Independent principles to cite such passages, as amounting to a proof that all believers have an inherent right to preach the Gospel, and that it is nothing more than a matter of order and convenience, if some men are chosen from others for the office of public preaching and instruction. Now, it cannot be doubted that Christians in a private station have a duty to perform in the way of bearing witness for the truth, and pressing it upon the attention and acceptance of those with whom they are associated by the ties of kindred, or even in the intercourse of social life. In respect of the Word of God, as much as in respect of the law of God, "no man liveth to himself,"[2] but has it laid upon him, as part of his duty, by all the means competent to his station, to press the truth of God, as well as the law of God, upon the consideration and acceptance of others. But just as there is an office in civil society and an officer specially set apart to execute the law of God, in so far as it is the law of society, so there is an office in the Church and an officer specially set apart to enforce upon men the Word of God, in so far as it is the teaching of the Church. The private teaching of the truth by individual believers is wholly different from the official teaching of the truth by public ministers; and the passages of Scripture

[1] Davidson, p. 243.

[2] Rom. xiv. 7.

which enjoin the one are not to be held as countenancing the other. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, exhorts even "aged women" to be "teachers of good things;" but the same apostle, in his Epistle to Timothy and to the Corinthians, declares that he "suffers not a woman to teach *in the Church*."[1]

II. The second remark necessary to be kept in view in dealing with the Independent theory is this, that extraordinary circumstances may justify the assumption of the office of the ministry by those who are not set apart or ordained to it by the office-bearers of the Church.

There may be extraordinary conjunctures in the history of the Christian Church which may warrant extraordinary measures; and when the necessity for avoiding a greater evil may justify or require a departure from the fixed rule for all ordinary cases, that the call of the Church, through the ordination of its office-bearers, is necessary, in addition to the call of Christ, to complete a man's title to the ministerial office. It is never to be forgotten that the Church, as "the body of Christ," "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," must have within itself provision of every spiritual power and grace necessary for its own being and well-being; and that, were even the office of the ministry to become extinct, and the order of ministers to terminate, there would be within the Church both the right and the power to revive and reconstitute the ordinance. It is never to be forgotten, that the call of Christ addressed to the individual directly by the bestowment upon him of gifts and qualifications for office, is the primary and superior right, as compared with the call of the Church giving right to the same individual to enter upon the exercise of the office; and that when the latter cannot be obtained, when the call of the Church is unavoidably awanting, the former, or the call of Christ, is sufficient to justify a man in assuming the office of the ministry. All this seems to be fairly warranted both by a consideration of the ministerial office itself, and by the general principles laid down in Scripture. The right to the ministerial office "*in esse*," conferred by the call of Christ, is prior and superior to the right to the ministerial office "*in operari*," conferred by the call of the Church; and when, as in some extraordinary conjuncture, ordination by the office-bearers of the

[1] Titus ii. 3; 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12; 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. Poole, *Quo Warranto*, Lond. 1658, pp. 39–82.

Christian Church, which usually supplements the call of Christ, cannot be enjoyed, the call from above does not need to wait on human investiture, but is sufficient of itself singly to give a man all the right to the ministerial office, to complete which, in common circumstances, both jointly are required.

The eighth chapter of the Acts is commonly appealed to by Independents on behalf of their views of the essential and inherent right of all believers to preach the Gospel and exercise the office of the ministry. We are there told that "there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." A few verses farther on we are told: "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (εὐαγγελιζομενοι τον λογον).[1] From these statements the inference is drawn and urged by Independents, that the Church in general, including the private members of it, went forth preaching the Gospel. Now, although this passage of Scripture does not necessarily force us to such a conclusion, but may be interpreted upon another theory,[2] I have no disposition or wish to deny that it may countenance and warrant the conduct of private members of the Church in preaching the Gospel, in circumstances like those which it describes. These very circumstances both exhibit the warrant for private believers entering on the work of the ministry, and indicate the principle on which limits may be set to the right so used by them. It was in a time of persecution, when the believers at Jerusalem were scattered abroad from their homes, and when the Apostles, their ministers in the Lord, were left behind, and the people were thus separated from the pastors. The extraordinary emergency in the Church justified the extraordinary means adopted to continue the work of

[1] Acts viii. 1, 4.

[2] It may very fairly be argued that "the Church" here means the Church representative. The persecution which began with the martyrdom of Stephen seems to have been specially directed against the office-bearers, as the leaders in the Christian community. "Had all the believers been scattered, what should the apostles have done at Jerusalem? Their tarrying there would have been dangerous to themselves and useless to the Church. And therefore we judge that by *all* is meant, all the Church officers (of whom there were many at Jerusalem) were scattered except the apostles, and when they were scattered they went everywhere preaching the Word." See the further remarks on this passage. *Jus Div. Minist. Evang.* Lond. 1654, pp. 110–112. *Reasons of Dissenting Brethren*, Lond. 1648. p. 18 f. *Answer of the Assembly*, Lond. 1648, pp. 30–33.

the ministry even by unordained believers; and it indicates the general principle also on which such justification in other cases must be based. It was in order to avoid the greater evil, that the lesser was incurred. That the ministry might not, in this particular case, become extinct, those who had the call of Christ to the office, although without the call of the Church, were justified in assuming it. Both the warrant for such conduct, and the limits to be set to the liberty assumed, are clearly brought out by the case of the persecuted and scattered believers at Jerusalem. It is a greater evil that the ministry of the Gospel should become extinct, that the office itself in any case should perish, than that men should assume it, without the ordinary call of the Church, but with the extraordinary call of the Church's Head. And therefore it was that the dispersed and persecuted flock at Jerusalem, separated from their pastors, and having no opportunity to obtain the usual ordination for any of their number, were warranted, without ordination, to preach the Gospel both among themselves and among the Jews or Gentiles with whom they were brought in contact. Whether the case of the Church at Jerusalem be justly cited as an instance of private members of the Church preaching the Gospel or not, it at least distinctly enough illustrates the warrant, and the limits of the warrant, which extraordinary circumstances may give to unordained men to assume the office and duties of ministers.[1]

Now, keeping in view these two preliminary remarks, the better to enable us to see the real point in debate between the advocates and opponents of the Independent theory, let us endeavour briefly to estimate the merits of that theory in so far as it bears on the ministerial title. Is the call of the office-bearers, as distinct from the members, and conferred by their setting apart by means of ordination a man to the office, necessary or not, in ordinary circumstances, to complete the ministerial title?

In answer to that question, I would lay down the general position, that ordination to office by the office-bearers of the Church is clearly distinguished from election to office in Scripture, and that ordination is, in ordinary circumstances, necessary to complete the ministerial title.

The fundamental error of the Independent system is the identifying or confounding of the ministerial with the pastoral

[1] Poole, *Quo Warranto*, Lond. 1658, pp. 63–67.

office, and making the act of admission to the one the same as the act of admission to the other. With Independents the ministerial office and the pastoral office are one and the same; there can be no office of the ministry apart from the pastoral relation. According to this view, a man, by his election to the office of a pastor in a particular congregation, becomes a minister, and in no other way; so long as he remains as pastor of a congregation, he remains also a minister; but when his connection with the congregation, through any circumstances, is dissolved, he ceases to be a minister of the Gospel, until he shall come to be re-elected by another congregation. Apart from the pastoral connection, there is no office of the ministry; apart from the election to the pastoral office, there is no ordination to the ministry; and apart from the continuance of the pastoral relationship, there is no holding of the character of a minister.[1] "Is a missionary," asks Dr. Davidson,—and he proceeds to answer his own question,—"Is a missionary not to be ordained before his departure from a Christianized to a heathen land? Properly speaking, *ordination* does not apply to him. The Church, however, of which he is a member, may solemnly commend him to the grace of Christ, and pray for him in a manner suitable to the circumstances of the case. A religious service of this nature is becoming and appropriate; but should not be called *an ordination*, because the individual is not in office, not having been elected to the pastoral duties by any people. Nor does the ceremony invest him with any official character. He is still an unofficial personage. He has no more right to preside at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper than he had before. . . . A minister is either the minister of one Church—namely, that by which he has been chosen—or else he is not a minister at all. When he ceases to be the pastor of a Church, he ceases to be a minister of the Gospel, till he be elected by another."[2] According to these views, then, the ministerial and pastoral office are one and the same; and the appointment to the one is the appointment to the other. Ordination and election are not to be separated in so far as they admit to the office of pastor or minister.

Now, in opposition to this view, it may be asserted that the Scriptures plainly distinguish between ordination to Church office

[1] Poole, *Quo Warranto*, Lond. 1658, pp. 4–38.
[2] Davidson, *Eccles. Pol.* pp. 251 f.

and election to Church office,—the one being necessary to the ministerial title, and the other, in addition, being necessary to the pastoral title.

1*st*, The practice of the apostolic Church, as recorded in Scripture, in connection with ordination, plainly distinguishes between ordination and election to Church office. They are not only distinct acts, but usually to be performed by distinct parties. *First*, We have an example of this in the election and ordination of deacons in the sixth chapter of the Acts: "Wherefore, brethren," said the Apostles, addressing the multitude of the disciples, "look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the Apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." [1] In this instance of the appointment of an ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearer—the deacon—we have the two separate acts of election to the office and ordination to the office, distinctly marked out, as different in themselves, and performed by different parties,—the one by the members, and the other by the office-bearers, of the Church. The two acts were separate from each other in nature, and in the performance of them; and yet both were conjoined to give the full title to the office of deacon.

Second, We have another example of this distinction between election to a Church office and ordination to it, in the instance of the appointment of Paul and Barnabas to the ministry of the Gentiles, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts: "And when they (the prophets and teachers of the Church at Antioch) ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." [2] Here also there is a broad line of distinction drawn between the choice or election of the two apostles to the office, and their investiture with or ordination to it. In this instance, the choice or election was not the act of the members of the Church, but of God Him-

[1] Acts vi. 3–6. [2] Acts xiii. 1-3.

self, while the investiture with the office was through the ordination of the office-bearers. It cannot be justly alleged that this example is inapplicable to the present argument, because the mission of the two apostles was extraordinary. Doubtless the mission was an extraordinary one, in so far as the call to it was extraordinary, but in nothing more. In itself, it affords an ordinary precedent of missionaries ordained to a foreign mission by the office-bearers of the Christian Church at home; and in this respect is expressly contradictory of the Independent theory, that the ministerial character cannot exist apart from the pastoral connection.

Third, In the twenty-third verse of the fourteenth chapter of the Acts we seem to have—when the passage is rightly interpreted — another practical example of the distinction uniformly maintained between election and ordination to office, in the instance of ordinary elders or ministers of a congregation: "And when they—that is, Barnabas and Saul—had ordained them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."[1] The word translated "*ordained*"—χειροτονησαντες—is the usual word to signify *election by suffrage;* and the meaning in this passage in all likelihood is: "When Barnabas and Saul had set apart elders, chosen by the suffrages of the members of the Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord." There is, first, the election by the people,—the χειροτονια; and then the ordination by the apostles, referred to under the mention of the special religious exercises of fasting and prayer,[2] προσευξαμενοι μετα νηστειων.

Fourth, In the case of Timothy we have another illustration of the distinction between the choice or election of a minister to

[1] Acts xiv. 23.

[2] [Quæritur a totâne Ecclesiâ elegi debeat minister, an a collegis tantum, et senioribus qui censuræ præsunt (ruling elders), an vero unius auctoritate constitui possit. Qui hoc jus ad unum hominem deferunt, citant quod ait Paulus ad Titum: "Propterea reliqui te in Creta, ut constituas oppidatim presbyteros." Item ad Timotheum: "Manus nemini cito imposueris." Sed falluntur si putant vel Timotheum Ephesi vel Titum in Cretâ regnum exercuisse, ut suo uterque arbitrio omnia disponeret. Præfuerunt enim tantum, ut bonis et salutaribus consiliis populo præirent: non ut soli, exclusis aliis omnibus, agerent quod placeret. Refert enim Lucas constitutos esse per ecclesias presbyteros a Paulo et Barnaba; sed rationem vel modum simul notat, quum dicit factum id esse suffragiis; χειροτονησαντες, inquit, πρεσβυτερους κατ' εκκλησιαν. Creabant ergo ipsi duo; sed tota multitudo, ut

the office, and the ordination or setting him apart to it. He was elected or chosen by God, for his appointment to the office was intimated "by prophecy;" and he was ordained or set apart "by laying on of the hands of the presbytery."[1] The office of evangelist, to which he was ordained, may be accounted indeed an extraordinary one; but the principle on which his election and his ordination to the office were kept distinct and separate, seems to have nothing extraordinary in it, but, on the contrary, is parallel to the other Scripture examples of appointment to the ministry.

Fifth, The injunction given to Timothy by the apostle, in regard to ordination of ministers: "Lay hands suddenly on no man;" and the case of Titus, who was left behind in Crete by the same apostle, "in order that he might settle or appoint (*ἵνα καταστησῃς*) elders in every city,"[2] undoubtedly point in the same direction as the passages already quoted, and furnish an additional proof of the constant and wide distinction between election on the one hand, and ordination on the other. We have Scripture authority for saying that the first, or the election of elders or ministers, was in the hands of the members of the Church. We have no less Scripture authority for saying that Timothy and Titus ordained elders or ministers in the Churches; and the better to enable them to do so, and for their direction in so ordaining, the Apostle Paul lays down the special qualifications necessary both as to character and abilities in the persons to be ordained. Was the act of election of ministers by the people the same thing as, or did it include, the act of ordination by Timothy and Titus? The very opposite conclusion is the one to which their practice in the matter points. The act of election was wholly distinct from the act of ordination to the ministerial office.

Such is the abundant and satisfactory evidence which Scrip-

mos Græcorum in electionibus erat, manibus sublatis declarabat quem habere vellet. Nempe sic Romani historici non raro loquuntur, Consulem, qui comitia habuerit, *creasse* novos magistratus, non aliam ob causam nisi quia suffragia receperit, et populum moderatus sit in eligendo. Non est certe credibile Paulum plus concessisse Timotheo et Tito quam sibi ipsi sumpserit. Videmus autem ipsum ex populi suffragiis episcopos creare solitum.—Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. iii. 15; *cf.* et cap. iv. 10, 11; cap. v. 2, 3. *Comment. in Act.* vi. 3, xiv. 23. So also Erasmus and Beza *in loc.* Gillespie, *Engl. Popish Cer.* Part iii. chap. viii. Dig. i. 3. *Miscell. Quest.* pp. 4–7, 24, in *Presbyt. Arm.* vol. ii. Alford translates the verse: "The apostles ordained the presbyters whom the Churches elected."]

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 14. [2] 1 Tim. v. 22; Titus i. 5.

ture affords to prove, that election to Church office and ordination to Church office are not necessarily conjoined, but in reality wholly distinct; and that, contrary to the theory of Independency, we must draw a broad line of demarcation between the ministerial office and the pastoral, and between the call by the office-bearers of the Church, ordinarily necessary to the one, and the choice or call by the members of the Church, ordinarily necessary to the other.

2*d*, There are express Scripture statements which very distinctly mark out the difference between ordination to Church office and election to Church office,—the first being commonly necessary to the ministerial title, and the second, in addition, being necessary to the pastoral title.

I shall refer at present to no more than two passages of Scripture that seem very distinctly to indicate this distinction.

First, In the tenth chapter of Romans the Apostle asks: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? *And how shall they preach except they be sent?*"[1] It is perfectly plain that, in this passage, in which the apostle speaks of sending preachers, it is such an authoritative sending by the Church as affords both a warrant to the preacher so sent to go forth to his work, and also a warrant to those among whom he is sent, that he has a right to preach and to minister among them. It is not a providential permission from God to go forth and preach, such as even false teachers may have, but an authoritative commission from the Church, such as those have who are specially set apart by the Church to the work of the ministry, whether at home or abroad. It is no less plain that this authoritative sending by the Church cannot be identified with the election by the members of the Church; for the very term "*sent*" is the opposite of "*choosing*" or *electing*." A congregation may *choose* or *elect* a minister for themselves; they cannot *send* a minister to themselves. The ordination, or sending by the Church, is in this passage unquestionably contradistinguished from election by the congregation. It is the act of the office-bearers of the Church, setting apart by ordination and authoritative commission an individual to the office of minister. It stands opposed, in this passage

[1] Rom. x. 14, 15.

of Scripture, to the act of the members of the Church calling and inviting an individual to take among them the office of pastor.[1]

Second, The same apostle, in writing to Timothy, says: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."[2] There are various points in this solemn injunction by the apostle, either expressed or implied, that directly bear upon our present argument. In the *first* place, we have the marked distinction between the *teachers* and the *taught* in the Christian society,—the one being a special and peculiar office in the Church, and not the common calling of all its members. Next, faithfulness and ability to teach were not the only necessary requisites of teachers; as if every good or gifted man in the Church might take to himself the office of the ministry. In addition to both graces and gifts, there was necessary, before a man could have, in ordinary circumstances, a title to the ministerial office, an authoritative commission from the Church: "The same *commit* thou to faithful men, able to teach." This special and authoritative *committal* of the work to them by Timothy, was as necessary as their endowments of faithfulness and ability to discharge it. And, lastly, we have this authoritative commission entrusted to them by Timothy, altogether apart from and independent of election by the people. The charge, "Commit thou to faithful men, able to teach," was separate from and over and above any choosing or election of such men by the members of the Church as their pastors.

The statements of Scripture, then, combine with the precedents afforded by Scripture example, to prove that the call by the office-bearers of the Church, in the shape of a solemn investiture of any man by them with office, is altogether separate and distinct from the election of the people; and that such solemn investiture or ordination is, in usual circumstances, necessary to give that man a title to ecclesiastical office. It is not in ordinary circumstances the inherent right of any man to preach the Gospel, as the Independent doctrine alleges. It is not in ordinary circumstances the inherent right of any man to preach the Gospel, even although he has been elected by a congregation for that end, without receiving, in addition to the election by the

[1] Poole, *Quo Warranto*, Lond. 1658, pp. 82–91. [2] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

people, ordination by the office-bearers of the Church. Election by the members of the Church we find in Scripture, and we assert that it is by Divine authority.[1] Ordination by the office-bearers of the Church we no less find in Scripture; and we equally affirm that this too is by Divine authority. The two are separate, and not inconsistent with each other. They are both and equally scriptural appointments. The same apostolic and inspired pattern, which gives warrant for "election or choosing of elders in every congregation" by the members of the Church (*χειροτονια*),[2] also gives warrant for the "ordaining of elders in every city" by the office-bearers of the Church (*χειροθεσια* or *καταστασις*).[2] The one of these stands on the same platform with the other. In giving a right to the pastoral office, the one is as necessary as the other; and in all ordinary circumstances, and in settled times of the Christian Church, investiture with office by the office-bearers of the Church is essential to the validity of the ministerial title.[3]

[1] [See especially Gillespie's answer to what is perhaps the most plausible argument against the non-intrusion principle—namely, that a dissent without reasons is irrational, and that the objections of a congregation to a proposed pastor must be substantiated to the satisfaction of some impartial judge before they can be sustained as valid. *Miscell. Quest.* chap. ii. obj. 3, p. 11 f. in *Presbyt. Arm.* vol. ii.]

[2] Acts xiv. 23; Tit. i. 5.

[3] *Jus Div. Minist. Evang.* Lond. 1654, pp. 2–4, 66–94, 133–140, 164–169. Poole, *Quo Warranto:* A Moderate inquiry into the Warrantableness of the Preaching of Gifted and Unordained Persons (in reply to an Independent work, *The Preacher Sent*), Lond. 1658, pp. 91–160. Seaman, *Vindication of the Judgment of the Reformed Churches concerning Ordination*, Lond. 1647. Rutherford, *Peaceable Plea for Paul's Presbyterie in Scotland*, Lond. 1642, pp. 30–38, 248–271. *Due Right of Presbyteries*, Lond. 1644, pp. 185–205, etc. Gillespie, *Miscell. Quest.* chap. iii.–vi. Apollonii, *Consideratio*, cap. v. Qu. 3. Hoornbeek, *Epistola de Independentismo* (addressed to John Durie), Lugduni Batav. 1660, pp. 265–294. Whytock, *Vind. of Presbyt.*, with Essays on the Church, Edin. 1843, pp. 265–280.

CHAPTER IV.

ORDINATION.

I HAVE already endeavoured to vindicate, against the views of Independents, the necessity, in all ordinary circumstances, of the call of the Church, expressed through her office-bearers, and by means of ordination, to complete the ministerial title. That there may be a crisis in the history of the Church, when in order to preserve the office itself it is lawful to sacrifice the outward call of the Church to the office, and to set apart men to the ministry without ordination by office-bearers, cannot be doubted. Such a crisis, perhaps, was the persecution at Jerusalem, when all except the Apostles were scattered abroad, and they went forth preaching the Gospel where they went. Certainly such a crisis was the Reformation from Popery, when, rather than acknowledge the authority of the Church of Rome, and receive ministers and ordination at her hands, it was lawful for the Reformed Churches—if such a necessity was laid upon them—by their own authority to revive the office of the ministry, and, without seeking ordination from those previously ordained, to set apart men to its duties.[1] We know that Luther, in his teaching on the subject, went much farther than this; mistaking the exception for the rule, and influenced perhaps by a regard to the extraordinary crisis in which he lived, rather than by views of the ordinary constitution of the Church, he adopted and expressed sentiments on this point very much at variance with the scriptural right of the office-bearers of the Church, in all common cases, to call and ordain to the ministry. The position taken up by Luther on this subject was a reaction from the extravagant and unscriptural principles of the Church of Rome. That Church had made ordination a sacrament, essential to the validity of the ministerial title and to the efficiency of Word and ordinances, and had held the necessity of apostolical

[1] Gillespie, *Miscell. Quest.* chap. iii. obj. 6.

succession and ordination in such a sense as to create a priestly caste in the Church, from whose lips alone saving truth was to be learned, and from whose hands alone saving grace was to be dispensed. In his letter on ordination addressed to the Bohemian Churches, Luther takes up his position at the opposite extreme: there and elsewhere he argues for the inherent right that every true believer has to do all which the priests of Rome pretended to do; and lays down the doctrine that it belongs to every private Christian, without regard to the ordination of the Church, to preach the Gospel, dispense the Sacraments, and exercise all the functions of the ministry.[1]

This position of Luther's, taken up under the influence of a strong feeling of reaction from the extravagant pretensions of the Romish Church, was not adopted by Calvin. To the illustrious Reformer of Geneva we are indebted for the development of the scriptural doctrine on the subject of ordination, which, since their secession from Popery, the Protestant Churches have generally adopted.[2] Calvin elevated to its true place the doctrine of the necessity of the call of the Church through ordination, in order to complete, in all ordinary circumstances, the ministerial title; and while acknowledging the force of much that was urged by Luther on behalf of the liberties and privileges of the Christian people, he modified and corrected his theory by placing the right of the office-bearers of the Church, in the matter of appointing to the

[1] *Epist. de Instituendis Ministris ad Clarissimum Senatum Pragensem*, 1523. *Opera*, Jena ed. tom. ii. p. 576, etc. [In this letter Luther sets forth the privileges belonging to the universal priesthood of all true believers as consisting in seven things.—the right to preach the Word, to baptize, to consecrate and dispense the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, to bind and loose sins, to offer sacrifice (in the sense of Rom. xii. 1 and 1 Pet. ii. 5), to pray for others, and to judge concerning doctrine. He follows this up, indeed, by an explanation, that though all Christians have an inherent right to discharge these functions, it is not fitting that all should actually exercise them. For the sake of order, some should be chosen to do the public work of the ministry in behalf of the rest, "lest there be a shameful confusion among the people of God, and a sort of Babel be created in the Church." Every private Christian, however, may preach, baptize, and give absolution of sins in his own house. It is easy to see how these views bore upon the position which Luther was willing to give to the civil magistrate in Church affairs. With respect to the importance he attached, notwithstanding, to an "ordentliche Berufung," see the references in Köstlin's interesting work, *Luther's Lehre von der Kirche*, Stuttgart 1853, pp. 68–75.]

[2] [Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. iii. 10–16. *Antidote to Council of Trent*, 7th Sess. Can. ix. x. Comp. Les Ordonnances ecclésiastiques de l'Eglise de Genève, 1541, given in Richter's *Evangel. Kirchenordnungen*, B. i. 342 ff. *Hutterus Redivivus*, 5te Aufl. p. 318 f. Matthes, *Comp. Symb.* p. 625 f.]

pastorate, on the same level with the right of the members. It is only by distinguishing, and yet combining as separate and co-ordinate forces, *election* by the people and *ordination* by the office-bearers of the Church, in all common cases, that the true and scriptural balance of power in the Christian society is maintained. The Independent theory identifies or confounds the two things. The views of Calvin, as maintained by Presbyterian Churches since his day, give a separate and co-ordinate authority to each.[1]

We have already endeavoured to ascertain, in the matter of the pastorate and ministerial offices, the place occupied by the call of Christ, the call of the office-bearers of the Church, and the call of the members of the Church. There is one question, however, of an important and interesting nature, that still remains for our consideration. What is the nature of ordination, and what is implied in the act? I do not by this question refer to the mere outward action of imposition of hands, which usually accompanies ordination. That action is a mere accessory or circumstance of the Church's act when she ordains to the office of the ministry, not essential to the validity of ordination any more than sprinkling instead of immersion is essential to the validity of baptism. The ceremony of laying on of hands we find, indeed, to be an invariable accompaniment of ordination in Scripture; and therefore we are entitled to say that it forms a part, although it may not be an essential part, of the scriptural institution.[2] There is no example that can be quoted from the New Testament of ordination without imposition of hands; and this of itself furnishes sufficient warrant and authority for the continuance of the practice in the Church, even although we may not attach any virtue to this part of the observance in itself. But without reference specially to the mere laying on of hands, what, I ask, is the meaning of the Church's act in ordination?

In answer to that question, the examination of Scripture doctrine and practice already made by us seems to warrant us in saying that ordination is the solemn act of the Church admitting a man to the office of the ministry, and giving him a right and

[1] *Jus Div. Minist. Evang.* Lond. 1654, p. 163.

[2] Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. viii. Digress. i. p. 165, in *Presbyt. Arm.* vol. i. *Miscell. Quest. Op.* viii. p. 146 in vol. ii. [Some further remarks by the author on this point, and on the doctrine of the First and Second Books of Discipline regarding imposition of hands in ordination, will be found in Append. H.]

title to discharge its functions. In all ordinary circumstances it is necessary to a man's entering on the work of the ministry lawfully; and without it he has no authority to exercise the office. It is to be carefully marked that it does not confer the office. Christ confers the office by His own call, addressed to whom He will. But it invests with the office, or admits to it. And in the act of investiture, or admission by the Church with the laying on of hands, and prayer, we have warrant to believe that, in answer to prayer, all the promises connected with the office are fulfilled, and the special blessing or grace suited to the office will be conferred. The act of ordination itself does not, and cannot, confer the blessing as if *ex opere operato*. It is not a charm; nor does it act like a charm in the way of imparting grace. But there are special promises connected with the office of the ministry, and special grace to be warrantably expected by all who are rightly called to the office; and in the act of admission to the office those promises may be claimed in faith, and those graces entreated for; and we have a right to believe that *then* and *there* the promise will be fulfilled, and the grace conferred. This is the only virtue attaching to ordination, when rightly conferred by the Church and received by the individual. But it is a virtue connected with it, and not to be enjoyed without it. There are promises and blessings specially linked with the entrance on the office of the ministry not given in connection with anything else. And when the Church proceeds with prayer and imposition of hands to admit to the office, and when the person previously called by Christ seeks entrance to the office from the Church in a right spirit, it is no superstition, but a scriptural and reasonable faith, to believe that in ordination the promises will be found true, and the blessing will be made effectual. At the moment of being ordained to the office, and in the subsequent discharge of its duties, there will be grace given sufficient for the office. Without or apart from this solemn admission to office, we have no assurance that, in ordinary circumstances, that grace can be enjoyed. Ordination is less than a charm, but it is more than a form.

There are two parties, more especially, whose theories of ordination run counter to the position now laid down. First, there are the Independents, who argue that we ascribe a virtue to ordination which does not belong to it; and second, there are

the High Churchmen, who argue for a virtue in ordination which we have not ascribed to it.

I. The general principles of Independents necessarily lead them to undervalue the importance of ordination. We have had occasion in a former lecture to remark that they sink the separate and distinct character of ordination as a solemn act of the Church's office-bearers, and identify or confound it with the election by the people of the person to exercise the ministry over them. With Independents, ordination is not the act of the Church admitting to or investing with the office of the ministry; it is a convenient and becoming religious service that may or may not take place in connection with a man's beginning his labours in the office. The election of the people has already admitted him to office: and ordination is a ceremony that has nothing to do with that admission as necessary to it. According to Dr. Davidson, as formerly quoted, "the essence of ordination consists in the solemn invocation of the Divine presence and assistance." In other words, ordination is nothing more than a prayer for the minister, which may or may not be offered up; which in not a few Independent Churches is actually dispensed with; and which, whether offered up or not, is in no way essential to the admission to office of the person on whose behalf it is presented. Not only so. According to Dr. Davidson, there are no special or peculiar promises that stand connected with ordination in this fashion, or that are so appropriate to the act as not to be guaranteed to any other act of the Church or individual. "There is not," says Dr. Davidson, speaking the views of the denomination of which he is a distinguished representative; "there is not one promise annexed to the ordaining prayer, as it has been called, and another adapted to prayer on general occasions. One class of promises was equally intended for the sacred exercise under all circumstances."[1]

Now, in reference to such views, I would remark that Presbyterians do not hold that there is any special promise annexed to the ordaining prayer, properly speaking, but they do hold that there are special promises and special grace connected with the office of the ministry, and with admission to the office of the ministry; and when the Church, in accordance with the will of her Divine Head, proceeds to admit by ordination the individual to be set apart to its duties, and when all parties engage in the

[1] Davidson, *Eccles. Pol. of the New Test.* p. 221.

work in a right frame of mind, *there* and *then* the prayer of the Church will bring down the special promise and the special grace appropriate to the occasion. If the ministry be an office of Christ's appointment, and if admission to the office by ordination be also of Christ's appointment, then such ordinances will not be empty of the blessing. The act of ordination by the Church, if it is a Divine appointment, and if done in a right spirit, will not be without the presence and the peace of Christ, owning His own institution and blessing His own ordinance. The fundamental error of the Independents in regard to ordination is, that they hold it to be no Divine appointment for admitting to the office of the ministry. That admission is the act of the people in electing their pastor; and because ordination is not the appointed method of admission to the office, it can have no special or appropriate blessing attached to it. The key to their denial of any peculiar value in ordination is, their previous denial that it is an act of the Church admitting to the office of the ministry. Once acknowledge that ordination is the solemn act of the Church, by which, in accordance with Christ's appointment, His servant is admitted to the ministry, and you at once restore ordination to its proper place as a Divine institute, and assign to it its special virtue and importance, as both warranted and blessed by Christ for that end. When conducted in a right and scriptural manner by all parties, it stands connected with the bestowment of grace and the fulfilment of promises appropriate to the office of the ministry, and necessary for the performance of the solemn and responsible duties to which the minister is *there* and *then* set apart.

II. The High Church party, whether Popish or Prelatic, hold views on the subject of the virtue attached to ordination which run to the very opposite extreme from the Independents. With the Church of Rome ordination is a sacrament, conferring on the party ordained an indelible "character," conveying to him, independently altogether of his faith in the matter or of his general spiritual condition, supernatural graces and priestly power *ex opere operato;* upon which the validity of his ministry and of his dispensation of Word and Sacrament depends. "If any shall say"—such is the deliverance of the Council of Trent on this subject—"that the Holy Spirit is not given by holy ordination, and that therefore the bishop says in vain, 'Receive thou the Holy Ghost;' or that by means of it a character is not imprinted;

or that he who has once been a priest can afterwards become a layman,—let him be accursed." "If any shall say that in the New Testament there is no visible and outward priesthood, or that it has not any power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord, and of remitting and retaining sins, but that it is the mere office and bare ministry of preaching the Gospel, let him be accursed."[1] The proper doctrine of the Church of Rome, then, is that the Church or bishop in the act of ordination communicates the Holy Ghost to the person ordained; that he is thereby vested with a priestly character, and put in possession of supernatural grace; that, thus made a real priest, he can make the sacrifice and offer it to God for the people; and that, thus endowed with supernatural grace, he is qualified to remit or retain sins in the case of sinners.

Without, of course, making all the extravagant pretensions or using much of the extravagant language of Popery, the Church of England yet ascribes to ordination something of a similar efficacy and mysterious power, although much inferior to what is attached to it by the Church of Rome. In some sense or other, which I do not take it upon me to explain, and in language borrowed from the previous formula of the Papacy, the Church of England professes to exercise the power, in the act of ordination, of communicating the Holy Ghost. Still further, in as explicit language as can be employed, the Church of England professes to ordain men, not to the *ministry*, but to the *priesthood*. The office of a human priesthood and an order of human priests are standing and permanent ordinances in the Church of England. In corroboration of these statements, it is only necessary to quote the words put into the mouth of the bishop in what is entitled, "The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests," at the moment of conferring the office by ordination on the person set apart to it: "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of His holy Sacraments. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

What are the powers and grace, supernatural and mysterious,

[1] *Concil. Trident. Canones et Decreta*, Sess. xxiii. *De Sacr. Ordinis*, Can. i. iv.

imparted at ordination, when the Church of England thus professes to confer the twofold gift of the Holy Ghost and the priesthood on the person ordained, and how far these powers and graces may differ from what the Church of Rome pretends to confer, I shall not take it upon me to determine, but rather allow one of the most illustrious of her own divines to speak. The words of Hooker—certainly not the least worthy or the least adequate of the representatives of the Church of England—shall explain her doctrine as to the grace and power imparted in ordination. Speaking of the miraculous powers of the Spirit, Hooker asserts that it was not of such that our Lord spake when He gave commission to His Apostles after His resurrection from the dead; and he then proceeds as follows: "What other effect of the Spirit likelier than that which himself doth mention, as it would seem of purpose to take away all ambiguous constructions, and to declare that the Holy Ghost which he then gave was a holy and a ghostly authority,—authority over the souls of men,—authority a part whereof consisteth in power to remit and retain sins. 'Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted; whose sins soever ye retain, they are retained.' *Seeing, therefore, that the same power is now given,* why should the same form of words expressing it be thought foolish?" "Now, besides that the power and authority delivered with those words is itself *χαρισμα,* a gracious donation which the Spirit of God doth bestow, we may most assuredly persuade ourselves that the hand which imposeth upon us the function of our ministry doth, under the same form of words, so tie itself thereunto, that he which receiveth the burden is thereby for ever warranted to have the Spirit *with* him and *in* him for assistance, aid, countenance, and support in whatsoever he faithfully doth to discharge duty." "We have for the least and meanest duties, performed by virtue of ministerial power, *that* to dignify, grace, and authorize them, which no other offices on earth can challenge. Whether we preach, pray, baptize, communicate, condemn, give absolution, or whatsoever, as disposers of God's mysteries, our words, judgments, acts, and deeds are not ours, but the Holy Ghost's."[1] And in another passage, if possible still more strong, Hooker declares, in regard to an ordained ministry: "The power of the ministry of God translateth out of darkness into glory; it raiseth men from

[1] Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* B. v. chap. lxxvii. 7, 8.

the earth, and bringeth God Himself down from heaven; by blessing visible elements, it maketh them invisible grace; it giveth daily the Holy Ghost; it hath to dispose of that flesh which was given for the life of the world, and that blood which was poured out to redeem souls; when it poureth malediction on the heads of the wicked, they perish; when it revoketh the same, they revive." [1]

Such is the doctrine of the Church of England in regard to ordination, as explained by one of the most gifted and eloquent of her sons, in connection with her own authorized service for ordination. It would be a somewhat perilous task, perhaps, to attempt to estimate the difference between the doctrine of the Church of England and the doctrine of Popery in reference to this matter. There are not a few points on which their theories of ordination coincide. In regard to the making of ordination a Sacrament, as is done by the Romish Church, they differ; [2] and with reference to this point I do not intend at present to speak, as it may come under our notice at a subsequent stage in our discussions, when we have to deal with the doctrine of the Sacraments. In regard to other matters connected with ordination—and those not unimportant ones—they also differ. But in these two things they seem to agree. *First*, they agree in ascribing to the Church the power of communicating the Holy Ghost to the person ordained,—thereby conveying to him supernatural grace and power wherewith to administer Word and Sacrament. *Second*, they agree in ascribing to the Church the power of conferring the office of the priesthood, and of making real priests and not ministers. In making these two claims, the Church of England and the Church of Rome agree; and on their pro-

[1] *Eccles. Pol.* B. v. chap. lxxvii. 1.

[2] ["Those five commonly called Sacraments—that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction—are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles,—partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God." —Art. xxv. This might seem to settle the question as to the doctrine of the English Church on this point. It has been discovered of late, however, by several writers of the High Church party, that this article, like so many of the rest, is "patient," though certainly not "ambitious" of "a Catholic sense." There are various ingenious methods of interpretation by which it can be shown, from this very statement, that the Church of England really holds Orders, like all the rest of the five, to be a Sacrament in the full sense of the word.]

fessed ability to confer on the person ordained supernatural grace and priestly virtue, the validity of his ministrations in all their exercises depends. The magic charm of ordination has in it power to make priests and to give mysterious grace; and without this power, ordination, according to this theory, would be an empty form, and the office it confers of a ministry in Word and Sacrament would be invalid and inefficacious.

Has the Church, then, this power, attributed to it by High Churchmen, whether Popish or Prelatic, of communicating, through the act of ordination, a priestly character and sacramental grace to the person ordained? Is the Church vested with authority from its Divine Head to make priests, in ordaining men to be ministers, and to give grace, supernatural and mysterious, in giving admission to the office of the ministry? Let us try the assumption by the Church of such power by those tests which on former occasions have more than once enabled us to set just limits to the exercise of ecclesiastical authority.

1*st*, If we bring this theory to the test of Scripture, as the rule of Church power, it is evident that the Church has no power to confer the priestly character, and along with it supernatural grace in the act of ordination.

If we inquire into the examples afforded us in the New Testament of the imposition of hands, we shall find that generally, although not always, the observance was accompanied with the communication or bestowment of miraculous gifts. By laying on of hands, the Apostles conferred "gifts of miracle, and healing, and tongues." The instances that might be quoted from the New Testament to this effect are numerous and familiar. But the imposition of hands in the New Testament times was not uniformly the sign or indication that miraculous gifts were conferred. The practice was observed when no such supernatural powers were bestowed, and when nothing beyond simple admission to Church office was implied. We know that the Apostle Paul possessed the gift of miraculous power long before he was set apart, along with Barnabas, by the pastors and Church at Antioch, to the ministry of the Gentiles; and yet on that occasion we find the Church laying on hands on the apostle's head, when nothing more than simple admission to the office could be implied. And in the case of Timothy, when he was commanded by Paul "to lay hands suddenly on no man," we have no reason whatsoever

to believe that anything beyond admission to the ordinary office of minister, including no miraculous endowments, was intended. Even in New Testament times, then, we are justified in saying that ordination by imposition of hands might convey to the person ordained nothing supernatural. And much more since the time when these supernatural powers have wholly ceased in the Church, are we justified in saying that the laying on of hands in ordination conveys no such extraordinary gifts.

But what is much more decisive against the claims put forth by High Churchmen in the matter of ordination, is the fact that the New Testament entirely disowns and repudiates the character of *priest*, which both the Church of Rome and the Church of England profess to confer. We cannot at present enter at length into the discussion of this topic, which lies at the root of the High Church pretensions and principles avowed by both. But it is deeply important to mark, that the Gospel knows nothing of the office of priest, except the one Priest who for our sakes has passed into the heavens, and absolutely repudiates the notion of any one on earth now assuming the power or doing the work of the priest's office. The very nature of the priestly character and functions, in their proper sense, is inconsistent with the Gospel, in so far as these are attributed to any mortal on earth. The making of a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice, the standing between sinners and God for the purpose of reconciliation, the intercession or mediation with the Almighty on behalf of others,—these are the duties of the priest's office; and Scripture tells us that these are no longer performed on earth, or performed in the Church of Christ by any human being on behalf of another. Under the former economy there were priests who ceremonially did these things, pointing by significant actions to what in the end of the world was to be done by the one Priest who was so not typically but really. In the Jewish Church there were priests, and sacrifices, and an altar, where the priest ministered, and the sacrifices were offered. But there is no such thing under the Gospel. Christianity is a religion without a priest, without an altar, without a sacrifice; or, rather, to state the case more accurately, Christianity is a religion whose Priest is already in heaven, whose sacrifice is already finished and accepted of God, and which consequently knows of no such ordinance now on earth. The notion of the priestly character, ascribed to its ministers both

by the Church of Rome and the Church of England, in different degrees, is at variance with the whole character of the Gospel and the true nature of the Gospel Church. Popery invests her ministers with the *entire* character of priests, when she ascribes to them the power of making the sacrifice in the Supper, and presenting it to God; of retaining and remitting sins; of acting as mediators and intercessors, praying not *with* but *for* the people in an unknown tongue; and of conferring or withholding supernatural grace. The Church of England invests her ministers, if not entirely, at least *partially*, with the character of real priests, when she ascribes to them the power of absolving and condemning, of giving virtue to Sacraments, and of conferring grace through their ministry; or, in the words of Hooker, the power by their ministry "of blessing visible elements and making them invisible grace; of giving daily the Holy Ghost; of disposing of the flesh which was given for the life of the world, and that blood which was poured out to redeem souls; of pouring maledictions on the heads of the wicked, so that they perish, and of revoking the same, so that they revive." Such priestly power and authority are abhorrent to the Gospel, and opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture. If there be any priests on earth known to the New Testament, they are not the ministers of the Gospel, but believers at large; for, spiritually, believers are "a royal priesthood, and a holy nation,"—"kings and priests unto God." If there be any sacrifices now, they are not the bread and wine blessed and broken by the hands of a priest of England or of Rome, but the souls and bodies of believers rendered unto the Lord as spiritual sacrifices.[1] Scripture, as the rule of Church power, repudiates the idea of the Church making priests under the Gospel.[2]

2*d*, A regard to the authority of Christ as the source of Church power, forbids the idea of the Church having power to confer by ordination the priestly character and supernatural grace.

There is something greatly dishonouring to the authority of Christ in the attempt by the Church to admit men to that office which Christ Himself once held on earth, and in which He can have no mortal successor. The work which it was necessary for Him personally as priest to do in this world, our Saviour has long

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9; Rev. i. 6, xx. 6; Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

[2] [See a full discussion of the question of Christian Priesthood, in vol. ii. of this work, Subdiv. iv. chap. iii. sec. 3.]

since ended; but He has neither abdicated nor ceased from the functions of His office. In contrasting the office of Christ with the brief continuance and the rapid succession of priests under the Mosaic dispensation, the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, declares, in regard to our Lord, "This man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood;" or, as it is better translated on the margin of our English version: "This man, because He continueth ever, hath a priesthood that passeth not from one to another" (*ἀπαράβατον ἐχει την ἱερωσυνην*).[1] Although He Himself has passed away from the scene of His mighty and mysterious sacrifice, yet His is a priesthood which shall never come to an end. His anointing as priest He still bears upon His glorified head in heaven; the blood of His sacrifice He still presents before His Father, and the benefits of His sacrifice He still administers Himself unto His Church. He will permit no priest chosen from among sinful men to be even in name His successor in that incommunicable office. He will allow no mortal to enter upon any one, even the smallest, of the duties of His priesthood. He still gives by His own hands, and not by the hands of others, the priestly gifts of pardon and absolution, of grace and spiritual virtue in His Church,—the priestly gifts of supernatural blessing and power to ordinances and Sacraments, and a preached Word among His people. The authority and rights of Christ forbid, as an unblessed and an evil thing, the conferring or the assumption of the priest's office by man.

3*d*, A regard to the liberty and edification of the Christian people, which forms the object of Church power, excludes the doctrine that the Church has power to confer by ordination the priestly character and supernatural grace.

There can be no thraldom on earth like the thraldom of being dependent on a fellow-creature—whether called a priest or a minister—for the spiritual blessings necessary for the salvation of the soul. To be in any measure at the mercy of a fellow-sinner for the bestowment of pardon and absolution from sin, of grace and peace,—to be at the mercy of a man like ourselves for dealing with God on our behalf, and obtaining from God priestly blessings,[2]—this is wholly at variance with that liberty wherewith

[1] Heb. vii. 24.

[2] [*Catech. Rom.* lib. ii. *De Sacr. Ordinis*, pp. 603–614. *Tracts for the Times, passim. Theoph. Angl.* Lond. 1863, pp. 83 f., 213, etc.]

Christ has made His people free. The spiritual freedom of the believer cannot consist with subjection to or dependence on a man for the bestowment of those blessings which are essential to our peace here and our welfare hereafter. That freedom consists in immediate subjection to Christ, and direct dependence on Him for the grace and the blessing we require; for *His* service alone is liberty, and dependence on *Him* alone is freedom. The priestly character assumed by men ordained by Rome or by the Church of England, and the priestly power ascribed to them of conferring grace as the only authorized dispensers of it, are utterly inconsistent with the spiritual liberties of believers.

4th, A regard to the nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, forbids the notion that the Church has power by ordination to confer the priestly character or supernatural grace.

The very nature of such an assumption is inconsistent with the true character of Church power as purely spiritual. The assertion that the laying on of hands can convey the Holy Ghost, and communicate a priestly character and grace, does seem to approach indefinitely near, if not altogether to reach, the claim of the *opus operatum* of the Church of Rome,—the pretension to a power by some mysterious manipulation, by some sleight of hand, old or new, to manufacture a Divine blessing. However it may be explained, it is wholly inconsistent with the spiritual nature of the Gospel dispensation, under which grace and blessing from on high are enjoyed, not by the use of outward ceremonies or the practice of outward observances, but by the spirit of man being brought into direct and immediate contact and communication with the Spirit of Christ. In no other way, except by the soul of man holding converse with the Spirit of God, as spirit with spirit, can grace be conferred or enjoyed; and outward ordinances are effectual for inward blessing, only when the ordinance brings the soul to the unseen Saviour to be blessed of Him. The claim to convey spiritual blessings by outward acts, and by them alone, is inconsistent with the true character and real nature of the power which the Church administers and wields.[1]

[1] *Jus Div. Minist. Evang.* Lond. 1654. pp. 170-180.

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